(Per)Forming Answers: Using Applied Theatre Techniques as a Tool for Qualitative Research.

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I, **Hannah Mangenda (student no. 204503908),** declare that

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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

<u>Abstract</u>

From the 1970s onwards Applied Theatre (AT) has become an ever more popular tool for communication in fields as varied as education, development, therapy, social action, business and others (see for example Blatner (ed.), 2007; Prentki & Preston (eds.), 2009). Over the same time period there has been a continuous questioning amongst academics not only of the most effective research methods but increasingly also of the philosophy underlying research efforts (Narayan & Srinivasan, 1994; Parks et al, 2005; Wilkins, 2000).

There are therefore more and more researchers who, in their attempts to ‗democratise‗ the research process, are beginning to use *arts-based inquiry* methods (Sanders, 2006). These generally allow a more inclusive, creative and in-depth approach to research, allowing the participants (‗the researched‗) more control over the process and the issues discussed and often benefiting them by imparting skills through the process (Belliveau, 2006; Peseta, 2007). Applied Theatre based research is part of this relatively new development (Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009) and it is at this junction of academic inquiry and AT where this research is situated.

The major objective of this dissertation is to investigate the possible usage and value of Applied Theatre techniques as a tool for qualitative research, specifically when working with participants not familiar with drama and theatre exercises over a short period of time (a few hours). In partnership with the student society *Students Against Rape And Hate* (S.A.R.A.H.), a once-off Applied Theatre workshop was conducted in a UKZN residence in September 2009. The aim of this workshop was to establish some answers to the questions provided by S.A.R.A.H. about students‗ views of relationships in general and in residences specifically and the society‗s possible work there.

To be able to compare the outcome of the workshop with the outcome of a more common research tool, a questionnaire asking the same questions was given out among other

students in the same residence. Research subjects from both groups as well as S.A.R.A.H. members were later interviewed about their experiences and impressions.

Comparing the data obtained through the different research methods described above, this dissertation not only evaluates whether the data collected with AT was useful and whether the process was practical for the researchers, but it also looks at the benefits the process itself had for all stakeholders involved. Indeed, it is this comparison of the ‚product outcomes' and the ‚process outcomes' that forms the backbone of the conclusions drawn.

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Introduction

<u>Play and Reflect: Realising Applied Theatre's integral research component</u>

I have been active in various Applied Theatre (AT) initiatives for the last eleven years, but only recently did it strike me why I am so enthusiastic about this form of communication. To my mind, AT is a connecting point of the creative power of the arts and the creative power of rigorous analysis. It not only affords an opportunity to reflect, but also to plan ahead and even to act. My question then was whether this aspect could be more formalised in a qualitative research setting. To illustrate the process that lead to this dissertation, I will recount some steps in its development.

In 2009 I was working with a business called *Shizaya Drums* which generally focused on offering team-building and diversity-training workshops in corporate environments. However, we also worked in schools from time to time and there we observed a great need of many teachers of the subject *Arts and Culture*[1] to be trained further.

Reading through the subject's policy statements (DoE, 2003) and speaking to one of the people who had first proposed this subject in its current form, we realised that what was asked of the teachers (and what seemed to confound most of them) especially in primary school, was not only to teach specific arts, but rather to use these arts as a tool for exploration, empowerment and community building. This was what we were doing in a different setting and so we started developing a workshop which would illustrate this interactive approach to Arts and Culture Teachers of grades 4 to 6.

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[1] *Arts and Culture* is one of the new subjects introduced under the South African government's plan to overhaul the education sector after apartheid, called *Curriculum 2005*. The methodology underpinning this change is called *Outcomes Based Education (OBE)* which was first introduced in South African schools in 1998. In 2010, the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, decided that OBE in its current form was not working well and introduced a number of reforms of the system. One of the curriculum changes will affect the subject of Arts and Culture which from 2014 will not be offered anymore in grades R to 6 (DBE, 2011; also see Chuenyane, 2010; Jansen, 1997).

We had two ‗prototype workshops' in the Pinetown district which of course needed to be evaluated to find out where we could improve and especially, if deemed a success, to ‗sell' the concept to the Department of Education (DoE). Next to the more conventional data gathering tools such as questionnaires and participant interviews, we also used AT techniques, specifically *Image Theatre* and *Role Plays* created by the participants for this evaluation.

These methods allowed the participants to reflect in a group on which part of the workshop was useful to them (for example new techniques learned), but also on how the process made them feel (Teacher Workshops, 13 February and 12 March 2009). In general, most of the teachers reported that taking part in the workshop made them feel confident, not only because they felt they were now better equipped for their lessons, but also because it validated the knowledge and skills they already had. They expressed enjoyment at learning from each other and sharing their own understanding (Teacher Interviews, 13 February and 12 March 2009).

While we were watching the participants' evaluation scenes and images, it struck me that AT allowed not only us the researchers to gain deeper insights than the other methods, but also that it afforded the participants themselves an opportunity to evaluate their experience on a more holistic and interactive basis. I was wondering whether this opportunity of ‗double-sided investigation' had been utilised by other researchers and whether it was possible to use this form of research with participants completely unaccustomed to drama. In my research I came upon quite a few recent examples of AT as a research method (for example Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009), but all of them either used drama repeatedly over a lengthy time period or observed an already established drama group.

As an Applied Theatre practitioner, I therefore became more and more intrigued by what I now see as the integral research component of all AT activities. In each AT ‗performance' there comes a point, where the audience is invited to analyse the situation portrayed and reflect on it and its relation to their own lives. Augusto Boal, the inventor

of the techniques of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) and arguably the most important AT practitioner and theoretician to date, clearly describes a tool for research when he asserts that ―It is not the place of the theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined" (1979:141).

On the other hand as an academic I do believe that research should never be an end in itself, but always guided by the aim of improving the society surrounding it. Similar ideas are most obviously found in theories surrounding *Action* or *Practitioner Research,* ―a research practice with a social change agenda" (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:4; also see Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2004) which always aims to be as participatory as possible. But even in the broader discussion about *Qualitative Research* in general have questions such as this arrived: ―Why is it that the knowledge created by social science research seldom leads to solutions to major societal problems?" (Greenwood & Levin, 2008:58).

These questions seem to be even more important in our South African context in which the academy is faced with both, ―major societal problems" that need to be taken care of and an institutional past (aligned with apartheid policies) that was based on unequal power relationships that are still underlying much academic work today (Hugo, 1998). That this situation calls for a high alertness on the part of researchers as to the nature of their research and the impact this will have on their environment (in particular _the researched') seems to be self-evident[2].

Applied Theatre as a formalised research method?

It is my position that this changed understanding of what research should do and what a researcher's role should be not only allows for a more creative and practical approach to

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[2] The notion that research is neither independent of the society surrounding it nor neutral in its approach is becoming more widely accepted in academia at large as well. This is for example reflected in the *Ethical Research Practices* nowadays insisted upon by many universities, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal (research.ukzn.ac.za).

the research process itself but that in fact, new research methods are needed that correspond with the theory, focusing on participation and empowerment.

There are therefore more and more researchers who, in their attempts to ‚democratise' the research process, are beginning to use *arts-based inquiry* methods (drawing, collage, narrative and others) which generally allow a more inclusive, creative and in-depth approach to research allowing the participants (‚the researched') more control over the process and the issues discussed and often benefiting them by imparting skills through the process (Belliveau, 2006; Peseta, 2007; Sanders, 2006). Applied Theatre based research is part of this relatively new development (Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009) and it is at this junction of academic inquiry and AT where my own research is situated.

At first sight, AT techniques seem to be ideal for this role, but their practicality and applicability in the field of research specifically still has to be investigated, with AT in general being a relatively new field of academic inquiry. In this case study, my major objective therefore was to investigate the possible usage and value of Applied Theatre techniques as a tool for qualitative research.

My practical research project investigated specifically the value of these techniques when working with participants not familiar with drama and theatre exercises over only a short period of time (a few hours). This was different to most of the research projects using AT cited above which often lasted for weeks, even months and/or work with participants belonging to an established drama group.

I was thinking that if my research showed that AT remains a useful research technique in a more common research setting it would add to the possibilities of researchers who try to embrace a more inclusive, participatory research paradigm. If, on the other hand, AT turned out to be ineffective in this setting, some limitations to this technique would have been found. I felt that in both cases a door to further investigation would have been opened.

In partnership with *Students Against Rape And Hate* (S.A.R.A.H.) a student society concerned with issues relating to the empowerment of women which is situated on the Howard College Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a once-off workshop was conducted in a UKZN residence[3] in September 2009. The aim of this workshop was to establish some answers to the questions provided by S.A.R.A.H. about students' views of relationships in general and in residences specifically and the society's possible work there (see workshop structure, Appendix 1).

In this workshop Applied Theatre techniques were used as the main tools for generating discussion and understanding of the issues at hand. To be able to compare the outcome of the workshop with the outcome of a more common research tool, a 'control group'[4] was established whose members filled out a questionnaire answering the same questions on paper as the workshop participants. Research subjects from both groups as well as S.A.R.A.H. members were later interviewed about their experiences and impressions.

I had hoped that the answers provided by the workshops and questionnaires would help S.A.R.A.H. develop appropriate programmes in UKZN residences, but the society members unfortunately became busy in running for the Student Representative Council (SRC). The student society then changed its focus of work and ultimately became largely inactive.

However, as I will show in Chapter Five, despite the fact that its findings were never put into practice, this research process was beneficial both for the participants and the S.A.R.A.H. members present during the workshop. In addition to this, I hope that this

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[3] S.A.R.A.H. originally approached me, a 'member on paper', for help in engaging students in residences in workshops. I then proposed to them the 'research format' of what should be the starting point of a series of workshops (not necessarily AT) with S.A.R.A.H., exploring challenges to life in residences and ways to overcome them.

[4] I am aware that the term 'control group' is usually used to describe a group ―whose make-up and circumstances is similar to the tested group, but who does not have access to the intervention" (Mangenda, 2008:4) and who is established to circumvent so-called validity threats (Valente, 2001, Kincaid, 2004). Here it describes a similar group of participants answering the same questions in a different way. The focus here then is on the difference (not the absence of) the method of inquiry makes to the answers given.

dissertation will add a little to the growing discussions surrounding both qualitative inquiry and AT.

Structure of dissertation

Chapter One provides a short overview of the history of both Applied Theatre and qualitative research. This is important since it provides the basis for the attempt to define these two concepts and what is generally understood by them, especially in the academic debate, which will be undertaken in Chapter Two. This chapter also focuses on more recent debates in both fields and looks at existing reports of AT as a research method.

Since the first two chapters discuss various methodologies at length, this part is kept rather short in Chapter Three which focuses mostly on the methods utilised in this case study to collect and analyse data. It also provides a detailed description of the AT exercises used in the workshop.

Chapter Four seeks to describe and analyse the data gathered through the workshop, the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews. Like the data collection, the analysis itself follows a multimethod approach, since ―each practice [of research] makes the world visible in a different way" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:5).

Providing some answers to the question whether AT is a useful method for qualitative inquiry is Chapter Five, which investigates this from different angles. It obviously questions whether the data collected with AT was useful and whether the process was practical for the researchers, but it also looks at the benefits (if any) the process itself had for all stakeholders involved. It is this comparison of the ‗product outcomes', that is the benefits derived from analysis of the data gathered, and the ‗process outcomes' as described above that forms the backbone of my conclusions.

Chapter One - Origins and Recent Debates

Historical Background of Applied Theatre

One can safely propose that the origin of all theatre is ‚Applied Theatre', since ‒the real root of drama is the make-believe play of middle childhood, a lively, imaginative, interactive process" (Blatner, 2007:xx). This process is not geared towards a performance, but is used as a tool for (unconscious) learning.

More importantly though, the origin of all formal theatre lies in the rituals that constituted the earliest form of performance, in the western world as much as everywhere else (Boal, 1979:119, Brockett & Hildy, 2003). These rituals always had (and have) a purpose that transcends the performance, like healing, purification or preparation for war (Banham, 2004; Kamlongera, 1989).

In fact, this characteristic has never really left theatre, since ‒performance is minutely tied into and active within the societies in which it operates" (Thompson, 2003:18). Playwright Tony Kushner for example argues that ‒Art is not merely contemplation, it is also action, and all action changes the world, at least a little" (2001:62).

This action can be more or less conscious and more or less effective, but means that there is always a purpose to theatre that transcends the performance. Of course, the most obvious one is the purpose of entertainment which is an essential ingredient of theatre and which in itself is situated outside the theatre itself. But probably more often than not, theatre aspires to more than that. From the Ancient Greeks who used theatre for collective catharsis, over the Christian Mystery Plays in the Middle Ages through to contemporary performances theatre has always also reflected the current ideology at work in a society, either by re-enforcing it or by critically contesting it (Martin, 1996).

Brazilian theatre practitioner, educator and politician Augusto Boal claims that ―all theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them" (1979:ix). Many playwrights and performers of more conventional plays would wholeheartedly agree with this statement. A critical contestation of hegemonic social values can therefore be found in texts as old as Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (415 B.C.) or as new as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1992). The former uses a historical subject (the Trojan War) to make a comment about a contemporary conflict (and especially the treatment of the defeated), while the latter speaks about the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic in the USA and its influence on the gay community as well as gender politics in general. A contemporary South African example would be Mike van Graan's *Green Man Flashing* (2004) ―which takes on the challenge of deep moral and political questions for which there are no ready answers […] and provides insight into the very real themes that occupy thinking South Africans" (Van Graan, 2004:2).

In fact, South Africa has a very rich history of what is termed here Protest Theatre, which emerged during the 1970s and 1980s and with which playwrights and performers challenged apartheid (see for example Kavanagh, 1985; von Kotze, 1988).

> By focusing on a multifaceted agenda of oppositional theatre, by promoting local work, by allowing experimentation and training for disadvantaged people, these [theatre] groups not only actively helped to broaden the scope and alter the form of South African theatre, but also gave it a distinctive character and status. (Rubin, 1997:273)

The most famous example of a South African play from this time is probably *Woza Albert!* (1980) by Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon but also most plays by Athol Fugard, like *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982).

So if all theatre has a purpose outside its own context, what makes Applied Theatre and its history different? While the lines are often blurry, AT can be said to be even more concerned with the topics it wants to address and less with the form this communication takes (Ackroyd, 2000). The content in this case takes precedence over the form, which is

(while often very aesthetic and visually exciting) generally chosen for practical considerations, to ‚carry the message'. Rather than being concerned with the art form and its development, AT practitioners regard it more as a ‚tool' to be used. It is important to note here though that many AT practitioners nevertheless are concerned with upholding a ‚high performance value' and are quite aware of the developments within the theatre world.

AT then, can be seen as growing organically out of general theatre practice by making this one characteristic its focal point. It uses ―the power of the theatre form to address something beyond the form itself" (Ackroyd, 2000:1). In the process it works closely with other branches of learning and becomes in effect an interdisciplinary practice.

One can also view the development of AT from a different angle though, as arising from these disciplines who were searching for new ways of communicating effectively and started to utilise drama and theatre (Prentki, 2009:12). In fact, I would argue that it is a combination of both approaches that led to the development of the many diverse branches of AT existing nowadays.

Although most of these interdisciplinary practices that make up AT today evolved in the second part of the twentieth century, many AT practitioners trace the beginnings of their craft back to Bertolt Brecht (Prentki, 2009:12; Schutzmann, 2006). They argue that his theatre work was clearly politically inspired and, more importantly, aimed at changing society, not just interpreting it (after Marx's famous dictum).

Formally, Brecht distinguished himself from more conventional theatre makers by challenging the audience never to suspend their disbelief, but to be conscious of the fact that they were watching a play and to engage intellectually rather than just emotionally with it. ―Brecht saw his epic theatre as one in which the spectator would play a vital and active role" (Brockett & Findlay, 1991:250) and there exists evidence that this approach would have eventually led to the abolishment of ―the distinction between actors and

audience […] had not the Nazi election victory of 1933 abruptly curtailed these activities" (Prentki & Preston, 2009:12).

All these characteristics of his work suggest that Brecht did in fact pre-empt a lot of the developments that would become more formalised and eventually known as AT half a century later. Interestingly, the publications of the majority of his plays and theories in English in the 1950s ‐coincided with a period of social and theatrical experimentation related to the grass-roots activism of the 1960s" (Prentki & Preston, 2009:12).

While Brecht clearly came from a conventional theatre background, being recognised today as a major formal playwright, he followed the idea of theatre as a tool for communication and education through more radically than any western theatre practitioner before him (see for example Brockett & Findlay, 1991). In some ways, the then Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic were much faster than the west in recognising this potential of theatre (having access to his German writings) and therefore one could argue that part of Brecht's legacy are the many plays and movies during the Cold War (and even before) that extolled and glamorised communism and its leaders.

As can be seen in these instances but also in any television advertisement, AT does not necessarily carry positive values. Like any tool, it can be used for diverse purposes. I feel that this is a fact that many AT practitioners like to ignore when they seem to imply that an AT process automatically leads to an improvement of a situation or at least to a heightened consciousness amongst the audience. This probably has to do with the history of AT and with who mostly used the term to describe his or her work, a situation that is currently changing. I will expand on this discussion in Chapter Two.

Two of the disciplines that started to draw on theatre quite early were psychiatry and education. In psychiatry a methodology called Drama Therapy (Barbato, 1945) started to develop around the middle of the 20th century. In this method the therapeutic effect of theatre (that was known to the Ancient Greeks as catharsis) becomes the focal point of

the work with the patient. In addition, drama was being used to teach students ‖how to handle various psychiatric situations and problems" (397).

This approach is also applied in Theatre and Drama in Education (TiE and DiE). While TiE generally uses a rehearsed performance to educate students, DiE works with drama methods involving the students as participants. Because ‖drama involves the participant […] intellectually, emotionally, physically, verbally, and socially" practitioners argue that children not only learn facts and become sensitive to the variety of possible viewpoints but also learn ‖to work cooperatively in groups" through DiE (McCaslin, 1996:89). AT then, provides teachers with methods to cover not only the intellectual part of education but also the social one.

Arguably, the two fields that work most closely with and had the biggest influence on AT are education and sociology. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970 putting forward his liberating ‗problem-posing education' instead of what he called the ‗banking' concept of education (1970: 52). He argued that the unjust distribution of wealth and power in a society creates a dualism between the oppressors and the oppressed which can only exist as long as the oppressed accept this situation as given and unchangeable. He then went on to explain how conventional education produces passive citizens that would not question the status quo thereby supporting the hegemony of the oppressors. His pedagogy on the other hand would ‗conscientise' the oppressed, enabling them to question their situation and ultimately to take action to change the structures of society. Freire calls this process ‗praxis' which he defines as ‖reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (1970:33).

Freire distinguished the two methodologies firstly by the ideas of what a student (and indeed any human being) is. He suggested that in the ‗banking' concept of education students were seen as passive, empty receptacles that need to be filled by the all-knowing teacher, unable to generate knowledge by themselves or become active parts of society without being instructed to do so.

In ‗problem-posing education' on the other hand, students are seen as already knowledgeable in their fields of expertise and capable of taking ownership of their own learning process with the teacher being more of a facilitator of learning who at no point supposes to know the answers to all things but rather journeys on a path of learning together with the students. Freire proposes that this kind of dialogical education will enable students to perceive themselves not as mere ‗objects' determined by the world, but rather as ‗subjects' shaping the world. He describes this process as follows:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (1970:64).

To enable people to not only intellectually perceive their world, but to actually physically see it represented, Augusto Boal, a Brazilian like Freire, developed the theatre methodology based on the latter's ideas which he called *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). The most famous form of this theatre is what he called *Forum Theatre* (Boal, 1979). In it, a spectator becomes a *Spect-Actor*, actively suggesting and even acting out solutions to the problems posed on stage. Following Freire's approach of a dialogic and open system of education, the Spect-Actors start determining what is happening in the play (which often resembles their lived circumstances) and see the consequences unfold. Boal asserted that ‖it is not the place of the theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined" (1979:141).

Boal however went even further than this and claimed that not only is it easier for people to reflect on their circumstances when they see them portrayed but that ‖these theatrical forms are without doubt a *rehearsal of revolution"* (1979:141), meaning that when a Spect-Actor has ‗rehearsed' a certain action within a Forum Theatre performance it will be easier to reproduce outside the safe theatre space in the ‗real world'. Whereas not all AT practitioners today who draw on Freire and Boal still aim for a revolution, it would be safe to say that all of them do wish to effect some kind of conscientisation within the audience and ultimately action towards individual and/or social change.

This is also the idea underlying what is known as Theatre for Development (TfD), a term that ―emerged in the mid 1990s as the umbrella phrase to describe the various practices undertaken by non-government agencies (NGOs)" (Prentki & Preston, 2009:13). TfD was and is one of the most widely used forms of AT in southern Africa. Drawing on Freire, TfD initiatives were started in the 1970s and 1980s in the fields of development communication and community building, examples of these early TfD projects would be Laedza Batanani in Botswana (founded 1974) or the Marotholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho (established 1982) (Mda, 1993: 13,65).

Defining TfD along Freire's line of thought, Frances Harding explains that for her ―‗Development' refers as much to ‗consciousness-raising' as to material development" and that ―it is such a transformation in one's own self-perception that may eventually lead to development of a material sort" (1998:5). She argues that TfD, by giving participants an opportunity to voice their concerns and to act out their solutions in a safe space, ―[empowers] people through their personal experience [and offers] a safe fictionalised context for real development" (16). It is therefore not the intellectual conscientisation of its participants but their ―experiencing through enactment the self as powerful [which] is one of Theatre for Development's most important achievements to date" (19).

Often though AT claims qualities and outcomes transcending the personal; in discussing Theatre of the Oppressed Barbara Santos notes for example that:

> Theatre of the Oppressed – and more specifically Forum Theatre – aside from promoting the discovery of the self, aside from reinforcing an individual's self-esteem and self-confidence, also contributes to the establishment of the collective "we" […] that comes from becoming a citizen who understands the world as a collective in which events are interdependent, both cause and consequence of social, political, economic and religious occurrences (2002:232).

Indeed, some practitioners argue that this connection between the individual and society is one of AT's most powerful outcomes and is not only a ‗nice by-product', but indeed a prerequisite of the successful empowerment of the individual since ―individual change is unlikely to be sustained unless the context in which it occurs is supportive of those

changes" (Durden, 2003:78). For example, Bethany Nelson, by evaluating a Drama Class, realised that what gave the students the ‚power to speak' was their *Sense of Community* (SOC; see Evans, 2007), a psychological construction defined as: ―the feeling that one is part of a readily available, supportive, and dependable structure" (Sarason as cited in Evans, 2007:695). Nelson argues that this SOC is intimately linked to power because it gave the students in their own words the ―control over a situation, or over somebody else, or even yourself". Intellectual conscientisation or even individual empowerment therefore is not enough to create lasting change, but ―people need to feel powerful in order to act" (2009: 64).

This community building potential of AT has been discovered by many disciplines and institutions who have not much use of drama traditionally, for example businesses who use AT methods in workshops for team-building or diversity training. So-called Industrial or Corporate Theatre can also encompass training sales people, entertaining and/or convincing prospective clients, educating workers on new policies and much more (see for example ellisandbheki.co.za or corporatetheatreproductions.com.au).

As can be seen by this short overview, AT is a wide and quickly growing field and as Judith Ackroyd suggests ―many of those who would fall under the umbrella title of Applied Theatre may not be familiar with or even aware of those with whom they huddle" (2000). Since this field is expanding so quickly in a variety of directions with an ever growing pool of practitioners she argues that:

> There is a crying need for evaluation of applied theatre. Research is required to look at the efficacy of applied theatre in its various forms. We need to know what distinctive contribution drama can make to changing attitudes and behaviour, and to be alert to any unintended consequences of using it. At the same time we need to appreciate that applied theatre is not only applied but also theatre. So there is also a need for a critical analysis of the theatre forms themselves (2000).

In answer to this need, a growing number of AT practitioners and researchers have, over the last decade, dedicated themselves to theorising the field and finding strategies of evaluation. These academics come mostly from the TfD or DiE angle and are not only concerned with the acceptance of ‚their' practice by the academic community or the

strengthening of AT's efficacy, but also with the _threat' that they feel is posed by such AT practitioners (mainly from the corporate world) who use it as a tool to _manipulate' and to ─reproduce the very hierarchies [AT is] designed to challenge" (Weinberg, 2000:31, also see Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2003; Nicholson, 2005; Chinyowa, 2006; Dalrymple, 2006; Epskamp, 2006; Hewson,2007; McCannon, 2008; Prentki & Preston, 2009).

<u>Debates around Recent Developments in Qualitative Research Practice</u>

To be able to speak about recent developments in this field, it is first necessary to look a bit closer at what the term _qualitative research practice' signifies and some of the ideologies that were attached to it over the years. According to Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln ─qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (1998:3).

Qualitative researchers, as opposed to those working with quantitative methods, ─often view human behaviour as being fluid, dynamic, and changing over time and place" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:35). This means that qualitative research does not attempt to (pre-) determine human behaviour but is always ─seeking out the _why' […] to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles" (qsrinternational.com).

To answer the questions it poses, ─Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3). It is ─multimethod in focus" and qualitative researchers generally choose their methods of inquiry according to the requirements of each specific study. Qualitative research therefore ─consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible, [that] turn the world into a series of representations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:4).

This might be true of research of any kind though. What has distinguished and defined qualitative research over the years is its notions of ‗place', specifically where it places the researcher and his or her research-subjects. It ―is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:4). In other words, qualitative research does not attempt to ‗neutralise' the environment of its research-subjects, but makes this environment itself part of what needs to be studied in order to ‗gain insight'.

In fact, qualitative research was first used by Western ethnographers and sociologists in the latter part of the 19th century who used it in their ‗fieldwork', usually to study and report on foreign cultures and peoples and their circumstances. More often than not these studies were implicated in and supportive of colonialism and the view that the uncivilised ‗Other' was in need of Western influence. These scientists worked in the positivist paradigm and ―were concerned with offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:20). They did not, of course, realise that their ‗objective viewpoint' was one specifically shaped by their own background and so ―the ‗Other' whom they studied was alien, foreign, and strange".

Confronted with this reality, the next generations of qualitative researchers were becoming more and more conscious of the researcher's own subject position and the influence this wielded not only on the analysis of material, but also the organisation and methods of data capturing. This realisation also informed the wish to use more formalised qualitative methods (see for example Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lofland, 1971), which was also hoped to counteract ongoing criticism about ‗unscientific' qualitative research practice.

At the same time qualitative research practice was beginning to be applied by a much wider range of researchers from across the human sciences and even natural sciences. These various influences and a general shift in the human sciences led to ―a more pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspective [which] took cultural representations and their meanings as its points of departure" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:22). Here, ―the observer has no privileged voice in the interpretations".

This "rupture" as Denzin and Lincoln call it, caused a "crisis of representation" in which research and writing became "more reflexive and called into question the issues of gender, class and race", problematising once again questions such as "validity, reliability, and objectivity, previously believed to be settled" (2008:24). More acutely than ever before, researchers became aware of the challenges that were inherent in their work. Who was allowed to speak for whom? With what authorisation? And how could one be sure that the ‚research outcome' was not just the personal opinion of the researcher, but indeed, the meaning that was brought by the ‚research subjects' to the phenomena studied?

In fact, researchers realised "that data are produced, not collected, and [that] it is the process of production that is fundamentally related to the product" (May, 2002:1). And since it was concluded that "objective reality can never be captured […] the question of the aloof observer was abandoned" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:7). By acknowledging their own subject position in the research process, qualitative researchers tried to counteract the ‚validity threat'[5] this posed to their results. The voice of the researcher then supposedly becomes one of the many "different voices" which, together, make up a "representation" of reality. This technique is called "triangulation" and is seen as a strategy that "adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry". Another name that qualitative researchers have given their multi-faceted practice is *bricolage* "which is [an emergent] construction", a never-finished project (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991:161, also see Lévi-Strauss, 1966).

Capturing various voices frequently needs various methods, and the *bricoleur's* "choice of practice […] is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive [and] depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend upon their context" (Nelson et al, 1992:2). A qualitative researcher will therefore use "whatever strategies, methods and empirical materials are at hand [and even] invent, or piece together, new tools and

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[5] I am aware that the term is usually used in another context. However, I find it is useful here to describe its danger to the validity of the research outcome.

techniques" if needed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:5). Doing this, he or she is not anymore bound by one single theory or ideology but ―works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms" (8). Summarising their illustration of the developments that the qualitative researcher has gone through Denzin and Licoln describe the *bricoleur* as follows:

> The interpretive *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting. The critical *bricoleur* [knows] that the boundaries that previously separated traditional disciplines no longer hold. The political *bricoleur* knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value-free science. […] The gendered, narrative *bricoleur* also knows that […] the narratives, or stories, scientists tell are accounts couched and framed within specific storytelling traditions, often defined as paradigms (e.g., positivism, postpositivism, constructivism) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:8).

Departing from these understandings and starting in fields like development communication and anthropology, researchers and practitioners have gradually become aware of the power structures operating through research as it is mostly practised today. Questions such as ‗What is the purpose of research?‘, ‗Does our research and writing have a moral responsibility?‘, ‗Who benefits from research?‘ and, even more radical, ‗Who gets to define the indicators of success and failure?‘ (Peseta, 2007:16 also see Narayan & Srinivasan, 1994; Parks et al, 2005) have begun to emerge.

Many academics these days assert therefore that research should never be an end in itself, but always guided by the aim of improving the society surrounding it. These ideas are most obviously expressed in theories surrounding *Action* or *Practitioner Research,* ―a research practice with a social change agenda" (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:4; also see Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; O‘Sullivan, 2004). But even in the broader discussion about *Qualitative Research* in general have questions such as this arrived: ―Why is it that the knowledge created by social science research seldom leads to solutions to major societal problems?" (Greenwood & Levin, 2008:58).

Especially for Action Researchers these concerns lead to the realisation that not only the end-product but even the process of research has ―political implications‖ and should include and benefit the participants (see for example Fox, Martin & Green, 2007:130ff). Proponents of this idea are mostly researching (and working) in the field of education and development (in the widest sense) and often subscribe to the notion of a ―critical methodology [which] embodies the emancipatory, empowering values of critical pedagogy, critical race and poststructural feminism‖ (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008:x; also see Lather, 2007:x-xi). They argue that not only the product but also the process of research and evaluation can easily propagate the unequal power structure that is often at the heart of development problems in the first place (Wilkins, 2000:197ff).

For example, if a development agency is implementing an intervention for the empowerment of women in a rural community, but the whole process of research and evaluation is defined by outside ‗experts‗ who define what it means to be empowered through their own experience and knowledge, then the research process itself becomes a tool for disempowerment. The ‗experts‗ view on empowerment shapes the way they read statistics, construct (and distribute) questionnaires, form questions in interviews and, finally, analyse the data. Instead of empowering the women by validating their own knowledge and letting them be part of the process of evaluating their own situation, they are being relegated to the position of *research subjects*, to be looked at, analysed and ultimately ‗othered‗ (Wilkins, 2000:201).

The solution then, it would seem, is a research practice that is not only sensitive to the implications for its ‗research-subjects‗ and tries to represent their views as correctly as possible, but which includes all stakeholders as active participants throughout the research process. The *Participatory Inquiry* Paradigm is one example of a theory which emphasises ―the person [and therefore the researcher and research subjects] as an embodied experiencing subject among others‖ as well as the need for ―integration of action with knowing‖ (Heron & Reason, 1997:292, also see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 255-286).

John Heron and Peter Reason propose a ―collaborative form of inquiry, in which all involved engage together in democratic dialogue as co-researchers and as co-subjects‖ (1997:281). In other words, the distinction between the researcher and the ‗research-subjects‘ becomes increasingly blurred, since all participants become involved in every step of the research process, the planning, data capturing, analysing and presenting. In fact, this pattern or ―cycling‖ as Heron and Reason call it, is firmly grounded in everyday lived experience and it is explicitly aimed at not just creating new knowledge as an end in itself, but improve the lives (in whatever way) of the research participants and thereby ―to change the world‖ (1997:284).

There are various Action Researchers who work more or less within this paradigm and whose explicit aim is to conduct research to improve certain conditions, usually by evaluating ‗development‘ interventions. One example of a theory like this is *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* (PM&E) which defines evaluation as ―any effort to increase human effectiveness through systematic data-based inquiry‖ and which stresses that ―the *process* [of evaluation] is at least as important as the *recommendations* and *results*‖ (Parks et al, 2005: 9-11).

PM&E is explicitly linked to *Communication for Social Change* (CFSC) which is ―a model of development communication based on *dialogue* versus monologue [...], equitable *participation* [and] *empowerment* [...]‖ (Figueroa et al, 2002:3, also see Gray-Felder and Deane, 1999:15). Research here, as in any other case of Participatory Inquiry, is then seen as an integral part of an action and not valued nor useful on its own. Describing this development Denzin and Lincoln suggest that ―the search for grand narratives was being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations‖ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:27).

This process of localisation as well as the wish to engage and empower the research participants on a more equal level, has given rise to a search for new methods of enquiry which support these goals. Arts-based methods are engaging on many different levels and are not bound by the hierarchy of ‗the researcher‘ and ‗the researched‘. Speaking about

Arts-Based Education Research, James Sanders argues that it ―challenges fixed notions of research representations, systematically demanding an ongoing re-imag(in)ing of knowledge claims, media deployment, and research methods" (2006:89). It is for these reasons that arts-based methods of inquiry are often used in research that aims to be inclusive. Various forms of Applied Theatre can be used as arts-based research methods and it is this potential that I will investigate in this paper.

Chapter Two - Separate Developments and their Connection Points: Reviewing the Literature

Applied Theatre

The term ‗Applied Theatre' (AT) is a relatively new term, emerging in a broad range of publications since around the year 2000. Writing in 2007, Judith Ackroyd stated that ‖[since then] however, the term has become common parlance - even beyond the academy" (3). She gives some possible explanations for this phenomenon, including the wish of AT practitioners to be seen as working within the wider field of theatre, while at the same time stressing its use and adaptability in ‗thereal world'.

The fact that ‖*applied* offers a more utilitarian concept" also ‖brings some alignment with the recent moves in higher education" which emphasise the need for imparting ‖skills that will contribute to the job market and engender economic growth". This alignment might also help the student recruitment at a time where ‖an applied theatre course which leads to specific training" might seem more useful than ‖a seemingly somewhat indulgent drama course". Ackroyd warns however of the implications this subservience to a ‖mechanistic agenda" might have for funding: ‖There is a rhetoric of transformation in the new discourse of applied theatre, but applications for funding with proposed outcomes may be perceived as reductive. By stepping into *applied*, we are more vulnerable to demands for outcomes" (2007:5f).

However, this development is not necessarily negative, since a number of AT practitioners (Ackroyd included) have themselves pointed out the need for more systematic evaluations of AT initiatives (see for example Ackroyd, 2006, 2000; Chinyowa, 2008; Dalrymple, 2006; Taylor, 2002). It seems then a matter of finding appropriate strategies to do so and to argue for them (see Chapter Three), without

succumbing to the pressure of a mechanistic worldview to follow simple input – outcome formulae.

Ackroyd, noting the proliferation of the term ‚applied theatre' in a journal like *Research in Drama Education*, ventures to say that ―perhaps there is an assumed status distinction between drama in education and applied theatre. The latter, with its sweep of different contexts, does appear somewhat grander" (2007:5).

It does not necessarily have to be an implied status hierarchy though that prompts practitioners to use the term, but rather the realisation that their experiences and understandings are – to a certain degree – transferable to other practices having similar characteristics. It would seem to be foolish, therefore, to pretend otherwise and stay in separate corners when one could learn from each other and argue together for common concerns. ―[A common term] has supported a sharing of knowledge [and] has meant the experiences of theatre in specific communities […] are brought into dialogue with each other" (Thompson, 2003:14). The term that seems to have emerged as the most apt in describing what all these various practices have in common is Applied Theatre, which has been used in not only a huge number of journal articles as Ackroyd pointed out, but also become the title of quite a few books (Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Taylor, 2003; Thompson, 2003).

Unfortunately, as Ackroyd also notes, some practitioners have moved AT ―from being an umbrella term […] to become a term referring to a specific form itself" excluding ―a range of other practices that might once have been deemed appropriately placed under an applied theatre umbrella" (2007:1). In the following, I will try to delineate a few of the distinctions some AT practitioners and theoreticians have drawn, at the same time arguing for the continued use of AT ―as a term, not a form or practice, […] to be inclusive of a range of practices […] to enable analysis of those many practices, pretty or ugly" (10).

It seems that most practitioners writing about AT today are dividing AT practices into three groups with different value judgments attached to them. Although this is usually not as clearly formulated, one can nevertheless often distinguish these three categories.

The first one, and oldest, is AT being embedded in another profession and its formalised activities. This is the case for example with Drama in Education (DiE) or Drama Therapy which are techniques being used within a much wider frame of reference in which the goal (education or therapy) is being pursued through the help of many different methods.

The second one is AT as the driving force and main method of whatever it is being applied to. Often, this is being organised in ‚projects' or ‚interventions' which may last from a few hours up to years but are generally concerned with tackling a specific situation in a community with the help of AT. This form is found mostly in Theatre for Development (TfD), Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and Legislative Theatre but also in Community Theatre and Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) and others.

The third category is one that AT practitioners, at least in their publications, often like to ignore, probably because it usually does not sit nicely with their professed goals and in which AT, in their eyes, is ‚abused' to manipulate people into believing a certain message. This form of AT can be found amongst others in corporate settings or in political or religious organisations where it is used to boost sales or to convert participants to a certain belief system (see for example christiantheaterministries.org, businesstheatre.biz or in fact any television or radio advertisement).

Indeed, when most practitioners speak about AT, they seem to only speak about the second group, or at least imply a hierarchy with this category being the ‚real' AT. This is a development that is probably due to the fact that most people theorising AT have their background in the ‚project-oriented' stream and simply use their experiences, goals and observations to define AT.

The American Philip Taylor for example speaks of a ‖reflective theatre, a theatre that is concerned with facilitating dialogue on who we are and what we aspire to become" (2003:xviii). At no point does he define what he thinks AT is, but the implied definition that can be found clearly shows his experience of it:

> Applied theatre is committed to the power of the aesthetic form for raising awareness about how we are situated in this world and what we as individuals and as communities might do to make the world a better place.

He argues that AT is ‖powered by a need to change" and ‖opens up new perspectives, poses options, and anticipates change". And although he asserts that the term AT is useful precisely because it encompasses different works for ‖diverse purposes", he lists those purposes as ‖raising awareness, posing alternatives, healing psychological wounds or barriers, challenging contemporary discourses, voicing the views of the silent and marginal" - a list I would argue is incomplete. Taylor's book *applied theatre* (2003) then, provides a good overview of and guidance to practitioners working in the second stream of AT, but little to those from the first, ignoring the existence of a third stream altogether. The subtitle of the book *creating transformative encounters in the community* is very clear about what it deems AT's function to be.

On the other side of the Atlantic, in Britain, the subtitle *Bewilderment and Beyond* to James Thompson's book *Applied Theatre* seems to imply an honestly confused but also more open-ended definition of AT. And indeed, Thompson argues right at the beginning that AT is…

> …practised, taught and researched without […] commensurate attention being given to understand its meaning. This book is therefore part of a necessary debate about what it has been, what it is and what it could be. (2003:13)

Immediately after this claim though, he states that ‖this book does not seek to offer a final definition of the term" (2003:14) and instead goes on to describe some of his observations, implying definitions similar to Taylor's. Thompson speaks of AT as ‖a socially engaged theatre", ‖a theatre that is wedded to vital issues and one that values debate" as well as one that is often ‖derived from the ‗theatre of the oppressed' tradition

of Augusto Boal" . Although he acknowledges that this is his individual position and explanation it is again obvious how personal experiences influence the – however reluctant – definition AT theorists give of the term.

Helen Nicholson echoes similar sentiments in her book *applied drama – the gift of theatre* when she speaks of ‖the relationship between theatre practice, social efficacy and community building" (2005:2f) and contends that AT is ‖specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies". But, like Thompson, she also realises that ‖there is no real consensus about how [AT is] used" and goes on to cite descriptions from different university courses and publications. Interesting here is the fact that British descriptions seem to focus on development and empowerment while practitioners in Australia and New Zealand seem to take a more inclusive view. For example, the international online journal *Applied Theatre Researcher* which was started in 2000 and is published by Griffith University in Queensland, Australia, includes articles on ‖drama and theatre in education, theatre for development, theatre in therapeutic settings, theatre in business, theatre in political debate and social action, theatre in life-long education, theatre in prisons, theatre in health education and awareness, theatre in aged care, theatre in hospitals, youth theatre" (griffith.edu.au).

It seems then, that the ‖exclusionary discourse" that Judith Ackroyd laments in writings about AT in which it is ‖emerging as a label for particular *types* of practice" (2007:7) is something that seems to be of particular concern in the United Kingdom and United States, but not in Australia and New Zealand where the AT practitioners ‖are a bit less moralistic" according to Jon O'Toole (cited in Ackroyd, 2007:8).

While these three regions are certainly the centres of current AT research and writing, Southern Africa too has a rich AT history, especially in the fields of TfD (see for example Mda, 1993) and politically engaged theatre in the 1970s and 1980s like workers' theatre (von Kotze, 1988; Sitas, 1996) and Protest Theatre which ‖transported the voice of freedom fighters across the stages of townships and the world" (Slachmuijlder, 1999).

More recently, South Africa has seen a huge number of health education projects, mostly concerned with HIV/AIDS (see for example Dalrymple, 2006; Durden, 2003).

It has taken time though, for South African practitioners to adopt the term Applied Theatre to label their work (the earliest example I found was in 2006), but here too the trend seems clear. The University of the Witwatersrand for example hosted their third *Africa Research Conference in Applied Drama and Theatre* in 2010, with the focus on ―four areas of continental concern" which fall clearly into the second group of AT: ―HIV/AIDS and health; environment; diversity and violence and conflict in relation to the pressing need to re-conceptualise what community means and why communities need to be transformed" (wits.ac.za).

It is ironic though, that the term AT, which was after all introduced as an umbrella term to connect different practices, should be used to ―delineate a restricted and exclusive type of radical practice" (Ackroyd, 2007:1) rather than to include any form of activity that shares basic characteristics with other forms of AT. It seems that practitioners, in trying so hard to portray ‗their' practice as useful, positive and ‗consciousness raising', have ―reproduced the very hierarchies [AT is] designed to challenge" (Weinberg, 2000:31) – an accusation that they prefer to throw at the third group of AT practitioners, who use ‗their' methodology for ‗unsavoury' ends.

This is a development though that I believe cannot last, since Applied Theatre is already being ‗taken over' by a whole range of practitioners who see in it a correct description of their activities as well as a possibility to widen their appeal in academic, but also in corporate or NGO funding circles. Far from being a ―definition that is rightly fluid [and] boundaryless" (Thompson, 2003:14f) or which ―defies any one definition" (Prentki & Preston, 2009:11) I believe it is actually not that difficult to define AT by four basic components that all of its theoreticians agree upon.

The first, and most obvious one, is the ―intentionality which all the various groups have in common. They share a belief in the power of the theatre form to address something

beyond the form itself" (Ackroyd, 2000:1) – hence the term ‗Applied'. Another characteristic on which all can agree is the fact that AT by its very nature is ―interdisciplinary and hybrid" (Nicholson, 2005:2). Whether it touches the fields of development and health or education and business, AT is always serving or collaborating with at least one other discipline. The third feature is that it is context specific, meaning ―the experiences of theatre in specific communities" (Thompson, 2003:14), being produced for or with ―specific communities" in ―specific locations" (Ackroyd, 2007:4). That does not mean AT cannot happen in a conventional theatre setting, but it does mean that it is not bound by such a setting. The last element of AT that all the different strands seem to agree on is the value that is placed on the process, the close interconnection between the process and the product (sometimes it is one and the same thing) and therefore the ―reluctance to make a neat separation between process and performance-based work" (Nicholson, 2005:4).

In fact, I believe one can even define AT in one sentence: It is a tool for communication which uses various theatre methods ―to address something beyond [theatre] itself" (Ackroyd, 2000:1). This tool is ―beyond good or bad. The outcomes are either good or bad according to values external to the aesthetic process" (Rasmussen, 2000:2).

This is a definition though that goes against what many AT practitioners believe, who think that it should be ―responsive to ordinary people and their stories" or ―[denote] the intention to employ theatre processes in the service of self-development, wellbeing and social change" (Prentki & Preston, 2009:9,14). This holding onto the notion that AT is always beneficial to society and has to fit into a certain philosophy is a dangerous one though, because it ignores many developments in fields such as Corporate Theatre or even DiE that can be harmful to or actually useful for other AT practitioners. At the same time this value judgment by most AT theoreticians is creating hierarchical relations which always beg the question: ―But who decides?" Ackroyd points this out after arguing that only if the term AT is ―inclusive of a range of practices" can it ―enable analysis of those many practices, pretty and ugly" (2007:10).

In other words, if current AT practitioners do not include others under their umbrella, they cannot claim to have any say about their practice. ―We must be prepared for theatre to be used for ends we wouldn't necessarily agree with" (Ackroyd, 2000:5), but if we pretend it doesn't exist, we cannot critically analyse it.

Of course, some theorists and practitioners do acknowledge its existence but do not want to share the AT ‗title'. I do not think this is possible though, the wider the term becomes known, the more people will use it because they recognise their own work in it. Pre-empting the comparison used further below one can see for example, how no practitioner of Applied Physics (AP) can deny that AP is used in the construction of destructive as well as constructive objects. However, they can criticise their colleagues for using ‗their' field in a certain way and suggest better uses. AT being a new term and struggling to define its (academic) feet, practitioners and academics still have to accept the wide range of the term they have chosen for themselves.

The interactive workshop that constitutes the AT part of this case study uses many exercises and concepts of Boal, who, with his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), is probably the most prominent figure of the second group. However, the question this investigation seeks to answer is whether it is possible to use these methods in a more conventional research setting. It falls therefore into the second group.

One other controversy that is exemplary of the insecurity around the term has to do with the name itself, specifically the word *Applied* and how *Applied Theatre* connects with *Theatre*. Bjorn Rasmussen seems to express the fears of quite a few AT practitioners when he states that ―I always found [the term AT] somewhat downgrading, implying that the applied stuff is second best, not quite as genuine [and] amplified a low status position" (2000:3).

However, this view seems to derive from an old academic viewpoint which sets *Applied* up as the opposite of *Pure* and in which the ―privileging of pure is clear" (Ackroyd, 2000:3). In fact, in today's academic and especially political climate, it is often the

applied sciences that are seen as the more important ones (because they are more ‗useful') and therefore the ones that deserve to be funded - a development that can also benefit AT as stated above (see for example Ackroyd, 2007:5; Nicholson, 2005:6).

It is not only the (assumed) implied hierarchies that worry AT practitioners though, but mostly it is the fear of opposing *Theatre* when they still want to be seen as belonging to that field and being artists in their own right. Especially having recognised, as shown in Chapter One, that AT is not only the source of all theatre, but ―all theatre belongs to, grows from, responds to, and cries against the contexts in which it is found" (Thompson, 2003:19).

In my view, this fear of opposition belies the reality underneath all of the applied fields. It would be obviously wrong for example to think that a researcher in Applied Chemistry (Physics, Maths etc) is not working in the wider field of Chemistry (Physics, Maths etc) and that a researcher in Pure Chemistry (Physics, Maths etc) does not hope that some day his or her findings will be applicable to the ‗real world'. The difference between the two then is not one of opposites but of a more gradual nature.

A field of inquiry can therefore be described as a continuum with *Applied* on the one end and *Pure* on the other on which all practitioners position themselves, some closer to the end points, others closer to the middle. *Applied Theatre* and *Theatre* therefore do not have to be posited against each other, since they are both parts of the same field, simply with different foci.

Emancipatory research paradigms

Research practice, whether qualitative or quantitative, is always directed by ―a basic set of beliefs that guide action", a so-called *research paradigm* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:245). These paradigms are not inevitable, but are on the contrary ―human constructions [which] define the worldview of the researcher".

According to Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, a paradigm informs the underlying assumptions of a researcher in four key areas: ethics (axioloy), epistemology, ontology and methodology. *Ethics* defines what the researcher understands by moral (or amoral) actions, *epistemology* defines the researcher's understanding of how the world can be known and his or her relationship to it, *ontology* defines the researcher's assumptions of the nature of reality and *methodology* defines what the researcher assumes are the best means to garner knowledge and understanding of this reality (2008:245).

The main research paradigms in use today can be roughly separated in two opposing groups, which I will call here the *positivist* and *interpretative or emancipatory* group. Practitioners working within those two groups might use the same methods or share the same moral ideals, but their ontology, that is the understanding of what constitutes reality or _truth' and how this can be known is substantially different and the two groups of paradigms are therefore not commensurable.

The first, older and academically more established, group includes positivist and post-positivist paradigms which hold that there is a _real' reality, a definite truth, out there which researchers can strive to apprehend. The second and – academically speaking – younger group consists of constructivist, critical theory and participatory paradigms, proponents of which believe that reality is not static but constructed by local, historical and social or interactive parameters (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:260). The human sciences in general and cultural studies in particular engage more and more with this paradigm since it reflects the postmodern ontological position of many possible truths instead of one global meta-narrative (see for example Fortier, 1997: 118; Jameson, 1991: 62).

Although, as stated above, researchers of both groups can nowadays share moral viewpoints and methodologies, traditionally each group has strong divergent beliefs and intentions. Since the positivist group is the older and still more dominant one in academia, it provides ─the backdrop against which these other paradigms and

perspectives operate" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:246) and from which researchers of the second group try to emancipate themselves and their research subjects.

For this reason (and others which are explained later in this chapter) the second group is also called the emancipatory research paradigms. It is these paradigms, with their underlying assumptions of multiple realities, which have shaped the shift in recent qualitative research practice outlined in Chapter One and which are slowly revolutionising the way researchers see their work and their relation to it.

While many different non-positivist paradigms emerged under a variety of different names, I will follow Guba and Lincoln in their summarisation of these under critical theory, constructivist and participatory paradigms (2008:260). In the following paragraphs I will describe each of them and give more specific examples of research practices subscribing to these paradigms. Subsequently, I will discuss how the need for new qualitative research methods arose out of them.

Critical Theory in social sciences traces its roots back to the early 20th century, to the philosophers of the ‗Frankfurt School' around Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno and later Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. According to Horkheimer, critical theory seeks not just to understand social conditions but ―to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982:244). Unlike positivists, critical theorists do not see reality as a simple given, but as a ―virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values" (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:260). This historical realism demands from the researcher to understand and reveal the oppressive structures shaping society in order for human beings to free themselves from them. Critical theorists seek ―their enterprise to be *practical* in a distinctively moral (rather than instrumental) sense" (Bohman, 2010).

This goal of emancipation from domination and a drive towards social equity naturally appeals to theorists and researchers working in fields such as feminist, race and queer studies (often with a neo-Marxist leaning) which work to reveal the hegemony of

patriarchal, white, heterosexual and capitalist structures in our societies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 249; 1998: 332; also see Carspecken & Apple, 1992: 541). Most contemporary critical theorists then can be found in these areas of cultural studies and critical ethnography.

However, since its beginnings, there has always been a multiplicity of critical theories with some researchers not only focusing on different subjects but even contradicting each other. Critical theorists argue that this is inevitable and even desired given that ―the critical tradition is always changing and evolving" and that ―critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008: 403). This situation makes it nearly impossible to render a definition of critical theory that would satisfy all researchers currently working in this field.

Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren provide a tentative description of a criticalist ―as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions" (2008:404). The most important one of these assumptions is ―that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted" and from this follows for example that there are no ‗pure facts', that our understanding of things and people is never fixed and always mediated, the importance of language to our conscious and unconscious awareness and the different facets of oppression: that it exists, that it is the harshest when the oppressed accept their condition, that there are many intersections of different forms of oppression (e.g. class, race, gender) which cannot be addressed in isolation and finally, ―that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression" (also see Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

One example of current critical inquiry is *critical race theory* which, as the name suggests, concerns itself with racialised identities which are determined by the hegemonic (that is white) power structures. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Jamel Donnor for example, speaking about different racialised groups in North America (African-Americans, Native

Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans) argue that ―each group is composed of myriad other national and ancestral origins, but the dominant ideology of the Euro-American epistemology has forced them into an essentialized and totalized unit" (2008:378).

Closer to home, we find similar ideas in the writings of postcolonial theorists who try to reclaim an identity not shaped by the colonial discourses of ‗white' and ‗the other' (see for example Mohanty, 1988, 2003; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Franz Fanon, probably the most influential writer on postcolonialism to date, explains the difficulties of this project with the connection between culture and the individual and collective identities it shapes: ―Colonial domination, because it is total and tends to over-simplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people" (1994:45). If one's cultural parameters are ―obliterated", how is one supposed to form an identity shaped by them and not the colonialist standards?

This is one example of where constructivism might add another dimension to a problem. While constructivists also believe that reality is constructed, not fixed, they generally work with an even more fluid idea of truth, arguing that ―people construct their own understanding of reality" (Oxford, 1997:35). While early constructivists, for example Giambattista Vico (1668 – 1774) and Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980), saw this concept quite radically, meaning that nothing existed except what was created in one's mind, most researchers today, following John Dewey (1859 – 1952) from the USA and Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) from the Soviet Union, tend towards a ‗social constructivism', believing that ―we ‗construct' meaning based upon our interactions with our surroundings" (Warrick, 2001:1ff) which leads to the above mentioned postmodern assumptions of many (constructed) truths coexisting rather than one universal meta-narrative of truth.

‗Reality' for the constructivists is therefore neither simply given to the individual by the material world (as proposed by positivists) nor exclusively prescribed by social and historical forces (as argued by critical theorists), but is created through a collective (!), never ending process of meaning-making. Since ―all truths are partial and incomplete"

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:246) a society as well as an individual can re-shape its reality by understanding the meaning-making processes it employs and the assumptions by which they are governed and consciously adjusting them to create empowering methods of meaning-making. Constructivists are therefore not only interested in deconstructing disempowering understandings of the world (as critical theorists also do), but even more so in ‑the production of **reconstructed** understandings of the social world" (emphasis my own).

For that, they argue, it is not only necessary to comprehend why we understand our world as we understand it, but also to recognise the mental and social processes and methods that are needed to arrive at that understanding. The underlying questions then are: How do we construct our understanding of the world? Who or what communicates in which way with us to give us a realisation of ‗our place in the world‘? By what processes does the society influence the individual and vice versa? And, most importantly: How can we ‗feed‘ these processes with re-visited assumptions and beliefs and re-create a more emancipatory view of the world?

For example, one of the most important cultural theorists drawing on constructivism, Stuart Hall (one of the founding fathers of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies) explains these processes and connects them to performativity when he states that ‑representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture" that involves ‑the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (1997:15). These questions just as obviously though relate to education and the theorising of teaching and learning which is why constructivism is often used as a theoretical framework for ‗non-positivistic‘ approaches to education (Warrick, 2001:14).

Constructivists are studying all these meaning-making processes because they believe that it is them that ultimately influence our actions. If researchers and participants can therefore comprehend how certain understandings are arrived at they can also comprehend (and re-shape) the actions that result from these understandings. It is

important to note here that also in constructivism more and more the distinction between 'the researcher' and 'the research-participants' is becoming blurred. This is an obvious development when one considers the constructivists' assertion that "knowledge cannot be separate from the knower" (Guba & Lincoln, 2008: 268) and their focus on "transactional knowledge" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:247).

For constructivist researchers then, theory is never fixed and should be always adapted since "the facts are built into a theory that is consistently improved by relating it to practice" (Neumann, 1998, cited in Chilisa & Preece, 2005:34). In fact "true knowledge in this context lies in the collective meaning made by the people that can inform individual and group actions that improve the lives of the people" (Chilisa & Preece, 2005:34). And it is this focus on practice that brings many constructivists nowadays in very close proximity to (participatory) action researchers and their insistence that the purpose of research is to facilitate emancipatory action (see for example Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 46; Guba & Lincoln, 2008:267; Heron & Reason, 1997:284).

Participatory research paradigms are usually built around the epistemological assumption that "knowledge is true if it can be turned into practice that empowers and transforms the lives of the people" (Chilisa & Preece, 2005:34). This means that "within the participative worldview the primary purpose of human inquiry is practical: our inquiry is our action in the service of human flourishing" (Heron & Reason, 1997:284). Research therefore is not distinct from action, but an integral part of it, becoming "praxis – practical, reflective, pragmatic action – directed to solving problems in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:46).

This is probably the aspect of emancipatory research paradigms that contrasts most significantly with the axiological assumptions of positivist researchers which usually still hold that action is the responsibility of communities, not researchers. It is their presumption that "the taint of action will interfere with, or even negate, the objectivity that is a (presumed) characteristic of rigorous scientific method inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:267).

According to Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln this shift of researchers toward social action was probably prompted ―as a response to widespread nonutilization of evaluation findings" as well as ―both a political and ethical commitment" (2008:267). This is a sentiment which can be found in many texts on participatory or action research, and which is illustrated by the following statement from Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin.

> Valid social knowledge is derived from practical reasoning engaged in through action. As action researchers, we believe that action is the only sensible way to generate and test knowledge. We find the widespread belief that being a social scientist means not being engaged in social action so peculiar and counterintuitive [...] (1998:6).

Many positivist researchers also take issue with the view held by emancipatory researchers that research is ―a moral and political activity that requires them to choose and commit themselves to a value position" (Chilisa & Preece, 2005:24). They prefer to think of their work as value-free and strive to achieve objectivity ―by using multiple measures and observations" like triangulation, to circumvent so-called validity threats.

According to emancipatory researchers however, this objectivity is an illusion and since ―data are produced, not collected" (May, 2002:1), it is important for the researcher to acknowledge his or her subject position and the influence this has on the research design and its evaluation. In fact, it is only by critically examining this subject position that the researcher can prevent inadvertently perpetuating an unequal power balance in society (in this case between the researcher and the ‗research subjects') which is often at the heart of many of the problems being researched by social sciences (Wilkins, 2000:197, also see Fox, Martin & Green, 2007:56).

Having stipulated that ―at a fundamental level research is political" and that the researcher should move ―from the role of being the expert in research to that of a process facilitator" (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007:56), some researchers now see the need for

participatory action in all parts of the research cycle.[6] This means that control of the research design, process and outcome is shared and does not solely lie with the researcher.

While this seems like an appealing idea in theory, many action researchers find that they not only have to ‗defend' their research designs against other, more conservative, researchers but also that the old research methodologies often do not suffice for this kind of research practice. They are therefore often utilising, in addition to more established methods of data collection like surveys and interviews, arts-based methods of inquiry (drawing, collage, narrative etc), which generally facilitate a more inclusive, creative and in-depth approach to research, generating a feeling of ownership amongst the participants (‗the researched'), allowing them more control over the process and the issues discussed and often benefiting them directly by imparting skills through the process (Belliveau, 2006; Peseta, 2007).

Performative inquiry: Applied Theatre as a research method

Probably the best known form of AT used as a research method is role-playing, an activity that can be defined as ―participation in simulated social situations that are intended to throw light upon the role/rule contexts governing ‗real life' social episodes" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:448). Although many academics even within the social sciences think of its use as a ‗new development', this tool has in fact been ―employed for decades in assessing personality, in business training and in psychotherapy" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:448; also see Ginsburg, 1978). For example, already in the 1930s Jacob Moreno introduced what was called ‗psychodrama' in the United States.

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[6] According to Fox, Martin & Green an action research cycle is composed of: Problem identification → Planning and implementation → Evaluation → Problem redefinition → Problem identification → ... (2007:50)

Role-playing as a research method can be used on various levels of activity of the research participants, reaching from simply imagining a scenario and describing it, as used by school teachers for example, to participating in a full-blown imitation of reality. An example of the latter and probably the most notorious instance of role play in research is the Stanford Prison experiment which took place in 1971 at Stanford University. A mock prison was constructed and volunteers were assigned to play the role of either a guard or a prisoner. The social psychology experiment, which was planned to last two weeks, was terminated after less than a week because the ‗guards‗ and ‗prisoners‗ identified too extremely with their roles, abusing and intimidating their fellow research subjects on the one hand and starting a rebellion and planning an escape on the other (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:450; Zimbardo, 1999).

This example illustrates very well one of the goals of role play which is often used to make participants aware of the different roles we play in life and how these roles affect our behaviour, although most applications of role play are found somewhere in between the two extremes outlined above. In Drama in Education (in the classroom context but also in other educational settings) for example, role play is often used to ―explore relationships‖ and practise empathy as well as train certain communication skills, such as active listening and formulating ideas clearly. While it is not always employed as an explicit research activity, role play often leads to ―reviewing‖ and ―analysing‖ experiences, roles and situations (Hunt, 1989:4ff; also see Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:452).

Another AT technique often used for research in the social sciences or psychology has to do with narration of one‗s own or other people‗s life experiences and encompasses again different degrees of action, from the simple ‗telling‗ of one‗s story to the incorporation of stories into a professional performance (either by oneself or by actors) in front of an audience to a performance eliciting these stories. As so often in AT, there are many names signifying the same or similar methods. Sometimes, in anthropology and sociology for example, this technique is called ‗ethnodrama‗ (Mienczakowski, 1997; Saldana 2003, 2005), in psychology ‗psychodrama‗ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:448), some

playwrights re-working traumatic experiences call it ‗testimonial theatre' (Fisher, 2009:112).

On the other side of the spectrum there is for example ‗theatre-based health research' (Kerr, 2009:100) which denotes a play based on personal experiences and research and designed to stimulate the audience into discussion. This form of theatre again exists in many different settings and often is not even given a specific name. As an aside this is also probably the AT research method which has the closest ties with traditional theatre settings, involving storylines and often being performed for an audience.

One can argue that these forms of AT fall under Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT), sometimes only called Popular Theatre, which is ‖a process of theatre which deeply involves specific communities in identifying issues of concern, analyzing current conditions and causes of a situation, identifying points of change, and analysing how change could happen and/or contributing to the actions implied" (Prentki & Selman, 2000:8). It is therefore always ethnographic, since it explicitly ‖draws on participants' experiences to collectively create theatre and engage in discussion of issues through theatrical means" (Conrad, 2004:4). This collective form of writing a play is usually called *playmaking* or *playbuilding* (see for example Belliveau, 2006:3).

To do this PPT, like many other forms of AT, often draws on the work of Augusto Boal and his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (also see Chapter One). His most widely used techniques are *Image Theatre,* where participants create fixed tableaux to represent their thoughts instead of scenes, *Simultaneous Dramaturgy,* which asks the audience to interrupt the action on stage, comment on it and suggest new actions for the actors to perform, and *Forum Theatre*, in which this idea is taken a step further, inviting spect-actors to actually become part of the performance to change its outcome (Boal, 1979, 1992). In all these techniques, the element of research is obvious since they all ask their participants to reflect and analyse, which is why they are employed by many researchers using AT.

George Belliveau for example, in his paper on a social justice project that he organised for teachers in training, explains how he used image theatre in creating a play about bullying (2006:3) which then toured schools where it engaged student audiences. Afterwards, instead of writing the usual academic paper on his experiences and findings from the process, Belliveau then wrote a play which depicts the ―learning experienced by the pre-service teachers during the playbuilding process‖ and which was shown at two academic conferences, where audience members again were asked to comment on it. He did this hoping with AT as a method, he could ―better capture the spirit of the collective process and represent the multiple voices of the participants‖ and the responses from the audience at the conferences seem to support these claims, stating for example that ―this research approach revealed the process in a multi-layered and unique fashion‖. This is one example of research then where AT was used at every step of the process, the planning, the implementation, the documentation, the evaluation and even the presentation of the evaluation findings and the evaluation of the evaluation.

All of these applications of AT to research are instances of *Performative Inquiry* (PI), which can be defined as ―a research methodology that uses the medium and processes of drama as a way of knowing‖ (Fels, 1998, quoted in Belliveau, 2006:7). Although Belliveau differentiates between ethnodrama and PI, it can be argued that the former is a subset of the latter, which is described rather broadly by Belliveau, drawing on Fels. He states that ―this qualitative approach investigates how performance (improvisation, tableaux, role drama, playbuilding) creates a co-evolving interaction between participants, their environment and the subject/theme within which moments of learning emerge‖ (2006:7). This means, since these parameters are always given, that all AT used for research purposes can, in fact, be termed PI.

Indeed, I will argue later that it is the ―co-evolving interaction between participants‖ that is one of the most successful and one of the most challenging aspects of AT as a research method. This has to do on the one hand with the (desired) multiplicity of voices, the tension between the subjective view and the communal effort and on the other hand with the skills that are required to facilitate this interaction successfully. Belliveau, for

example, states clearly that it was his ―professional training in theatre" (2006:5) and ―artistic experience" that enabled him to facilitate this process, which was in many ways much more complex than a ‗normal' research process and therefore, it would seem, harder to guide and to implement at times.

Chapter Three[7] - Methodology and Methods

Underlying research paradigms

Underlying this research is the social *constructivist* notion that ―we ‗construct' meaning based upon our interactions with our surroundings" (Warrick, 2001:1), that our reality is therefore not fixed but created out of individual experiences. In this case this means that the research process in itself is experienced and interpreted differently by all participants. In addition to that this research is committed to the *Action Research* idea that research should not be an end to itself but rather be part of an on-going process towards social change (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:4). This also implies that ―valid social knowledge is derived from practical reasoning engaged in through action" (1998:6).

Incorporating these two research philosophies and taking them further is the *Participatory Inquiry* Paradigm, which emphasises ―the person [and therefore the researcher and research subjects] as an embodied experiencing subject among others", the need for ―integration of action with knowing" as well as suggesting *co-operative inquiry* as the research method (Heron & Reason, 1997: 292; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 255). In this method every ‗stakeholder' (especially the researcher and participants but also the research commissioner, funder and wider community) is involved in every step of the process, the planning, implementation and evaluation.

However, while the Applied Theatre workshop used to collect data for the purposes of this research can be understood as a form of *co-operative inquiry*, the overall research design rested primarily with the researcher as well as the commissioner of the research (S.A.R.A.H.) and not with the research subjects. In this aspect then it resembled more a *constructivist* research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 255). According to Denzin and

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[7] Since this dissertation is about methodology, a lot of background into the different research paradigms has been given in the last chapters.

Lincoln this ―interbreeding" between the various paradigms as they call it, is nowadays a frequent occurrence and a natural development given the openness of most postmodern paradigms and the practitioners' grounding in practical research experience rather than theory (2008: 256).

Data Collection

In my research, which took the form of a case study, I used three methods of data collection, an interactive Applied Theatre workshop, a questionnaire with open ended questions as well as individual in-depth interviews. The AT workshop and the questionnaire were both based on the list of questions S.A.R.A.H. had given me and the guiding questions for the interviews were developed in cooperation with my supervisor, Dr Young-Jahangeer. When designing these tools I also drew on my experiences facilitating similar workshops in a variety of settings as well as evaluating the teacher workshops for *Shizaya Drums* (see Introduction) and the DramAidE programme (Mangenda, 20008). In the following I will expand on each of them.

Applied Theatre Workshop

    1. Participants

        The interactive workshop was held in one of the UKZN residences with 16 participants, nine men and seven women. They were all black African, mostly from a Zulu background and between 18 and 22 years old. It is important to note that two were also S.A.R.A.H. members. Except one person, all participants stayed in the same residence. Nevertheless, many did not know each other very well, a fact that was commented on a lot during the interviews and which will be expanded on in Chapter Five.

These participants were chosen by convenience sampling[8], they all responded to advertisements by S.A.R.A.H. of the event which was described as a workshop about relationships; most seemed to have been ‗recruited' by the one S.A.R.A.H. member staying in the residence. I asked that the workshop should not be advertised as a ‗drama' workshop since the focus was to be on the content – ‗relationships' – and not on the form. Also, I knew that it would put some people off. As they confirmed in the interviews, none of the participants (including the S.A.R.A.H. members) had been involved in any kind of drama before.

2. Format

The workshop was created around a set of questions about inter-personal relationships given by S.A.R.A.H. to the researcher (see Appendix 1 for the workshop structure) and was planned to last two hours. Unfortunately, due to some participants arriving late and having to leave early, it was not longer than approximately 75 minutes, therefore not all the planned content could be covered (a fact that becomes important in the analysis).

As becomes clear, when reading the outline below, the AT games and exercises were used to facilitate discussions around the questions and to enable the participants to voice their opinion as well as reflect on it in an interactive way. The format was meant to be an organic flow of games and discussions that would inform each other and eventually lead to a more and more detailed analysis. Of more established research tools, it probably resembles most a focus group interview[9].

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[8] According to Johnson and Christensen convenience sampling occurs when researchers ―include in their sample people who are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study" (2012:230).
[9] ―A focus group is a type of group interview in which a moderator (working for the researcher) leads a discussion with a small group of individuals […] to examine, in detail, how the group members think and feel about a topic" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:204).

Therefore, after an introduction of the facilitator, the S.A.R.A.H. society and an explanation of the research I was conducting, the workshop started with warm-up games and trust exercises. Most of the games used are described by Boal who is also referenced, although he of course did not invent all of them. It is important to note here that far from being just a fun way to pass the time, games are integral to the smooth functioning of any AT project, in fact, the distinction between ‗games' and ‗exercises' becomes impossible to make[10], since games here take the role they have when we are children: tools for experiential learning and ways of making abstract concepts come to life as well as a way to build social cohesion (Young-Jahangeer, 2005).

This workshop was filmed (with the consent of the participants) for documentation purposes. I was worried at first that people would be distracted by the camera, but they did not seem to be bothered by it at all, even forgetting about it.

3. Preparation

The whole idea of AT is that one does not only learn or experience an idea intellectually, but also physically on a much more primal and holistic level. To prepare the participants for a different physical experience, I asked that they take their shoes off. This simple action immediately signalled a different approach to the workshop to what the participants expected. In general, I also find that it nicely throws off any established power balances, since everybody has to step out of his or her comfort zone to participate.

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[10] I am aware that Boal defines exercises as physical monologues and games as physical dialogues (1992:xxx), I however did not make that distinction however when I planned the workshop.

4. Laughing Round

This is a very simple game, in which the group learns an easy clapping and laughing rhythm, which is then ‗performed' with different groups in a round. The purpose of this exercise is to make the participants aware of each other and force them to cooperate and listen to where everybody else is at. There is also always a lot of enjoyment, so participants relax and let go of any mistrust they might have towards the facilitator and/or the programme.

5. Introduction Circle

After this low-focus group exercise, the participants seemed to feel comfortable enough with the process to move on to something more high focus (Baim, Bookes & Mountford, 2002:30). I asked that everybody step into the circle (one after the other) to introduce him or herself, which included pronouncing their name loudly and acting out their favourite pastime, which was then, together with their name, repeated by the group. Although this was challenging for some of the participants (none of whom had experience in performing), in the end all felt safe enough to step forward and pronounce their name, and all but one acted out their hobby. This exercise was used obviously to help get to know each other, but also to prepare each individual for the images and role plays he or she would create later and to let the group get into the habit of supporting its members.

6. Walking (Boal, 1992:116)

As mentioned earlier, drama is an essentially physical experience, and one of the challenges that many people have with performing is that they are not very connected (or do not want to be) to their bodies. To help the participants become aware of their bodies, I asked them to simply walk without touching

each other, giving different directions from time to time such as slow motion, backwards, fast walk, run etc.

7. 1,2,3 Game (Boal, 1992:99)

At the end of the previous exercise I just asked the participants to partner up with the person closest to them. Then they had to count to three, with one person saying _one' the other _two' and the first one _three'. Then the second person would start with _one', the first one continue with _two' etc. After this, they were asked to replace _one' with a simple movement that they both agreed upon, so instead of saying _one' when it was their turn, they would do the movement. This exercise's main benefit is obviously cooperation and focus; focus on the partner and on oneself and what one's body is doing. As soon as focus is lost, the game disintegrates.

8. Trust exercise (Boal, 1992:106)

One of the partners in each pair was then asked to close the eyes and the other partner had to guide him or her without bumping into other participants, chairs or walls. After a while the roles were reversed. This game is obviously meant to build trust between the partners and to challenge the participants to take a (controlled) risk. Both a feeling of trust within the group and a positive risk taking attitude are essential to the success of an AT session.

9. Role Play 1

The pairs were then asked to act out situations without being given any time to think about them beforehand, so everything was improvised and just took a few seconds. Since every pair acted at the same time, nobody was watching each other, and everybody felt brave enough to _perform'. Of course, some pairs were very loud and others more reticent, but everybody swopped

characters when asked to. There was also a lot of laughing, especially when a woman had to play a man or a man a woman. The following situations were given: A policeman and a speeder; a gogo and her granddaughter wearing a revealing top; a man chatting up a woman; a woman chatting up a man and two best friends fighting. The idea was, that while the first scenarios lent themselves to acting out stereotypes (the cop, the gogo) which is a bit easier at first, the last ones, especially the best friends' fighting, lent itself to acting out one's own ideas about a friendship.

10. Images

These exercises built on Boal's notion of *Image Theatre* (1992, 164), although they always stayed at the first stage, the ‚frozen picture', and never went on to the *dynamisations[11]*. They would just ‚freeze' like a picture taken in action. To illustrate how the technique works, I asked the participants first to make individual images of following concepts: fear, love, hunger, coffee, favourite meal, friendship. Some of them, like hunger and fear, they found easy to portray, probably because there are gestures that most people will recognise as such. When making an image of love and of coffee though, some had to think harder. The last image was ‚friendship' and a few people automatically chose to work with the person next to them because they found this concept impossible to portray on their own.

From there, they were asked to portray an image with a partner how they think ‚real friendship' looks like. We then went around the circle, looking at each image and commenting on it. There was alot of hilarity, for example when a man and woman hugged, with some people commenting it looked more like

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[11] *Dynamisation* is a term used by Boal when speaking about his image theatre techniques and denotes any process in which an original image gets ‚reworked'. This can include techniques such as linking the individual images together or incorporating spectators and eventually become ‚moving pictures' (1992:164).

desire than friendship, but also when two men hugged. These comments then led to a discussion around the questions whether a friendship between men is different than a friendship between women and whether men and women can be ‗just friends'.

11. Number game (Boal, 1992:116)

To bring some excitement and movement into the group again, I then asked them to get into groups of the numbers I called out. This was also a nice opportunity to observe group dynamics, for example who was the most ambitious in the game, do men and women mix etc. I ended this game with calling out ‗4' so there were four groups in the end.

12. Role Play 2

These groups were then asked to prepare a short scene to show to the rest of the group about a romantic relationship that has ‗gone wrong'. They had about five minutes to prepare and although some were quite shy to start at the beginning, everybody chose to act in the end (even though they had been given the option to not act and just help create the scene).

These scenes were then watched and analysed by the rest of the group (borrowing from Boal's *Forum Theatre* (1992)) and included topics such as domestic violence, bad communication, cheating, friendship vs. relationship, blaming the partner etc. The discussion that followed each scene was quite detailed and will be analysed in more detail in Chapter Five.

13. End

The final exercise of the workshop was planned to focus the discussion (with the help of another image exercise as well as a mindmap[12]) onto life as a student in a residence and onto what kind of events S.A.R.A.H. should organise, but because some participants had to leave early, this was cut short. There was a small round of discussion about which sort of activities people would wish for in residence and then more informal conversations about the topics touched on in the workshop while some people stayed behind for some food.

Questionnaire

To be able to draw conclusions about the usefulness of AT as a research method, the answers it produced and the effects it had on the participants were compared to those of a more conventional data collection method, a questionnaire. While the workshop was taking place, a member of S.A.R.A.H. gave out a questionnaire with open ended questions (based on the same guidelines as the workshop) in the same residence to students not participating in the workshop (see Appendix 2 for the questionnaire). The simultaneous nature of these exercises prevented any contact between the two sample groups before answering the questions so that it can be assumed that they had a similar level of consciousness regarding the content of the questions.

The twelve respondents (nine female, three male) of the questionnaire were also chosen by convenience sampling since the S.A.R.A.H. member simply walked around and asked people who were in their rooms at the time whether they would like to participate. They did fall into the same demographic as the workshop participants, being 18 to 21 year old black African students at UKZN. The fact that it was a woman asking, and that the topic

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[12] A Mindmap, also called a spidergram, is ―a diagram (= simple plan) with lines and circles for organising information so that it is easier to use or remember" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2011).

relationships' is generally more appealing to women may have explained why the sample had three times the number of female respondents. Interestingly, the same prerequisites were given for the workshop, but more male participants joined there. This probably had to do with interested men bringing their friends for support'.

Qualitative Interviews

To evaluate the impact the process of participating in the workshop and the questionnaire had, participants from both sample groups as well as S.A.R.A.H. members took part in one-on-one guided in-depth interviews (see Appendices 3 to 5 for the interview templates). These interviews took place approximately one month after the workshop and questionnaires to assess what were the most memorable moments of the experience for the participants. I interviewed six of the questionnaire respondents, five of the workshop participants and three S.A.R.A.H. members (of which two were also workshop participants). Again, these interviewees were chosen by convenience sampling. The workshop participants and questionnaire respondents were given a form on which to indicate whether they would mind being contacted for an interview. From the questionnaire respondents only six said they would be happy to be interviewed so I met them all. Due to time constraints I was unable to meet all of the workshop participants, who all wanted to be interviewed. I therefore interviewed 14 in total.

Observation

Participant observation, which is both a data gathering tool as well as method of analysis (see below), concerns itself with "the ways in which people interact and relate to one another within given sites or spaces" (Gray, 2003:82). It "involves observing all potentially relevant phenomena […] without specifying in advance exactly what is to be observed (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 207). On the spectrum between complete participant' and complete observer' (209) I would position myself as an observer-as-participant', since I was, as the facilitator of the workshop, an outsider to the group of participants and spent only little time with them.

Data Analysis

In data analysis, as in the data collection, I used a mixed-method approach, or what is sometimes called *methodological triangulation*. The different methods made it possible to look at the data from a variety of angles which was ‒meant to insure that any interpretation is supported and qualified by a range of data" (Winston, 2006:47).

Narrative Analysis

According to *Participatory Inquiry* ‒to experience anything is to participate in it, and to participate is both to mould and to encounter, hence experiential reality is always subjective-objective" (Heron & Reason, 1997:276). Therefore I started with describing my personal observations and experiences in a *narrative analysis* of this case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:248-251) to both record a valid part of the research process as well as critically examine my own subjective point of view.

Narrativity seemed to be the obvious choice when analysing my data, since with AT, even more than with other research tools, it becomes clear that ‒social research is a set of socially constructed understandings built out of discourse structures" (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:125). To portray this discourse, which is essentially a process and not a once-off event, as accurately as possible, it needed to be possible to recount the following: The exceptions to the found rules, the actions that sometimes contradicted, sometimes supported what participants said and the interplay between the researcher/facilitator and the participants.

It also needed to portray the analysis of the data collected which was provided by the participants themselves. During the workshop many of the actions or statements were commented on, analysed and evaluated. As I will show in Chapter Five, the two processes of data collection and analysis are inseparable with AT.

Coding

To code and analyse the questions and the answers given, the *constant comparative method* was employed. This method starts from the given empirical information rather than from theory and consists of ―comparing incidents applicable to categories, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting and writing the theory" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 331). This method was first defined and employed by *Grounded Theory*[13] (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 329), but soon adopted by researchers working within other paradigms, like Constructivism and Participative Inquiry.

When coding the data gathered, I soon realised that it was not possible, or in any case not useful, to employ rigid rubrics. This was due to the fact that many answers, especially those given in the workshop, could be seen as belonging to a variety of categories, depending on where to place the emphasis. Even more important is the fact that participants also contradicted themselves, sometimes even in one sentence (see discussion on page 66). Simply entering this data then in a table would mean these two points of view would negate each other. It became apparent therefore that the analysis, rather than to yield a table of coded answers, needed to be more of a narrative kind, also to acknowledge the many different types of data collected (visual, verbal, written). This challenge when analysing AT as a research tool is also discussed in Chapter Four (page 100).

Observation

Through *participant observation* (afterwards with the help of the video), as well as critical evaluation of the interviews, the value of AT as a research method was assessed according to the *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* claim (PM&E) that research

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[13] Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss coined the term in their book in 1967 stating that researchers should ―discover theory from data" (1967:1) rather than trying to validate a theory that was chosen before the actual research process. They ―wanted to counter what they saw as a tendency in their field to focus on *theory confirmation* […] rather than on *theory generation* and construction" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012;399).

should benefit all stakeholders involved (Parks et al, 2005:7). The Action Research paradigm, within which PM&E is working, states also that ―action is the only sensible way to generate and test new knowledge" (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:6). Some of the focus of this analysis was therefore on the process and the ‗knowledge it generated and tested' rather than only on the end product of the research process.

Limitations and restraints

Probably the most obvious limitation to this case study is that while it claims to be supported by *Participatory Inquiry,* the research process was by no means participatory throughout. There are a few explanations for this. The main reason is that the major objective was to investigate the possible usage and value of Applied Theatre techniques as a tool for qualitative research, focussing specifically on the value of these techniques when working with participants not familiar with drama and theatre exercises over only a short period of time (a few hours). The purpose of this was to be different to most of the other research projects using AT (Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Peseta, 2007) which often last for weeks, even months and/or work with participants belonging to an established drama group so to investigate the possibility of using AT in more conventional qualitative research settings which are usually pressed for time and funds.

This research though fell not only short of the demands of Participatory Inquiry but also of those from *Action Research (AR)* which stipulate that theory and praxis should not be separate and that research should be ―collaboratively applied" (Greenwood & Levin, 2008:70). While the process of the research workshop as well as the questionnaires did yield some direct outcomes for the participants (see Chapter Five) the follow-up did not happen as planned. However, this was not due to the inadequacy of the research but to the discontinuing of such work by S.A.R.A.H. shortly after this research was executed. The planned usage of the research product therefore never took place and it cannot be commented on in terms of its actual helpfulness in the field of social change.

Another limitation of this research is that it only used quite a small research sample of 16 workshop participants (two of which were S.A.R.A.H. members) and 12 questionnaire respondents. One month afterwards, five workshop participants, six questionnaire respondents and three S.A.R.A.H. members (of whom two had participated in and one had observed the workshop) took part in one-on-one in-depth interviews. This small sample was due to the fact that the workshops were supposed to be planned and advertised by S.A.R.A.H. in the residences they wanted to target, but the society members unfortunately became busy in running for the Student Representative Council (SRC) and did not manage, despite repeated reminders, to organise any more workshops. The student society then changed its focus of work and ultimately became largely inactive. Speaking to the participants during the interviews and from personal observations, I nevertheless feel that the findings of this research can be generalised and helpful to other researchers, since there were methodological insights gained about AT as a qualitative method for data collection (as will be shown in Chapter Five) that can be used in similar research contexts.

The last and probably most important limitation to this research is the fact that the researcher was the facilitator of the research workshop as well. Although this is quite congruent with the *Action Research* and the *Participatory Inquiry* paradigms underlying this research, it is obvious that, although being mindful of the challenge, my agenda as the researcher might have driven parts of the workshop, ‗looking' for pre-conceived results. This however, is a challenge which all researchers ultimately face, trying not to let their personal likes and dislikes ‗contaminate' the research, and which might even be less likely to happen in an interactive and participatory workshop. This point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Linked to this is not only the question about the role the facilitator plays in the gathering of data but also the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully facilitate a research workshop like this and whether this prevents researchers without a theatre background to utilise AT methods. All of the examples I found of AT as a research method (for example

Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009) were created and executed by researchers with drama backgrounds.

This question is also linked to the debate around what AT practitioners most commonly term ‚intervention', the concept of an outsider facilitating social change in a specific group. Most of the analysis of AT practitioners on the role of the facilitator is focused on certain attitudes this person should have. According to Zakes Mda for example, this ‚catalyst' in Theatre for Development should have ‚a higher level of social consciousness' (1993: 173), an assertion that sits somewhat uneasily with many AT practitioners' wish to have complete and equal participation (also see for example Preston, 2009:127) .

In another field Dorothy Heathcote, speaking about the teacher's role in Drama in Education, stresses the importance of the teacher's awareness of the ‚human material' he or she is working with, of the ‚distortion' that does not come more but more blatantly to the fore than with other methods and of the need for a ‚form to give shape to these ideas' (2009: 202). The teacher therefore needs to be sensitive to each individual student and their experiences, accept the sometimes obvious contradictions in the process and steer the process in a disciplined way. Where a facilitator or ‚joker' as the role is called in Boal's Forum Theatre (1979), overlooks important contributions or fails to keep control of the process, it can cause even serious psychological damage to the participants instead of empowering them (Hewson, 2007; White, 2006).

Keeping this responsibility in mind, most AT practitioners seem to agree that ‚optimal intervention' (Mda, 1993:172) –is not achieved through a fixed formula but only through a dialectical interaction of participants and facilitators who are practising a co-intentional approach to self-development and social change" (Prentki, 2009:183). That is quite vague for a person who has never been involved in an AT process and although there are guidelines offering examples and ideas (for example Hunt, 1989), there still seems to be a lack of focus on which practical skills need to be developed (if any) before embarking on

this route. For a similar discussion about practitioners' necessary skills in Action Research see for example 'The Friendly Outsider' (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:104).

In addition to the points made above, my subject position as a white, non-IsiZulu speaking, 28 year old female student on the one hand clearly made me an 'outsider' in the group and limited my communication with the participants to English. On the other hand, since I came as a member of S.A.R.A.H. (whose members present were both black and white) and was introduced as a fellow student (albeit postgraduate), the participants did not seem to take issue with this fact and discussed with me on 'eye level'. There were also at least two other participants whose mother tongue was not IsiZulu. During the workshop I felt that, if anything, my 'otherness', the colour of my skin and age, might have helped me to gain authority during the games and exercises when it was very important that I, as the facilitator, stayed in control of the process.

I found that my subject position was a bigger challenge during the interviews, where some people were shyer to speak out than in the workshop and I felt that I might have gotten longer answers in IsiZulu. And I realised my personal views (as well as those of the S.A.R.A.H. members) came especially to the fore in analysing the workshop. This is a challenge that will be expanded on in Chapter Five.

In this chapter I described the underlying methodological considerations as well as the limitations of this research. Having also shown how I went about collecting and analysing the data, I will now proceed to describe the data itself.

Chapter Four - Analysis

(Per)Forming Answers: A narrative analysis of the S.A.R.A.H. research workshop using Applied Theatre in a UKZN residence

Since the focus of this dissertation is to ascertain the usefulness of AT as a qualitative research method, I will at first have to speak about the data itself that was collected through this process. I believe it is necessary to show how AT was used in this context and then to compare the data gathered to that collected through a more conventional research method, a questionnaire. This is what I will be doing in this chapter. Chapter Five will then be dedicated to establish AT's usefulness as a qualitative research method.

Because the last chapter contained details about the ‗mechanics' of the exercises, I will start with my personal observations that stood out while facilitating the workshop, reading my notes and watching the video recording. After this I will contrast the answers given in the workshop with the responses from the questionnaire.

The workshop was planned to last two hours, from 5 to 7 pm, but had to be cut short due to some participants having to leave early. It took place in a room in the residence that is usually used for student gatherings and socials which was tiled and approximately 6x7 meters wide. The furniture consisted of two tables and a lectern that were moved to the side as well as plastic chairs that were arranged in a circle when the participants came in. The walls were bare except for a mirror on one wall. I was at first a bit worried that it would distract or inhibit some participants but, as with the camera, they seemed quite oblivious of it and focused inside the circle.

I had asked S.A.R.A.H. to organise about 20 participants and 16 came, which turned out to be a very good number for various reasons. Firstly, a bigger group might have had problems moving freely in the room (that was not very big after all) during some of the exercises. Also, the acoustics of the almost bare and tiled room were terrible so that every

noise was magnified and even with a small group it was sometimes hard to hear and to be heard. On the other hand that had the advantage that the participants in general were very disciplined and listened carefully to each other, so as not to miss a point. In addition to that it was nice that 16 participants could be both divided into eight pairs and four equal groups so that nobody had to feel left out. But most importantly, I felt that the group was big enough to feel secure for some shyer members while at the same time small enough to give everybody a chance to voice his or her opinion, even in the short space of time that was given.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, all of the participants were black African students and between 18 and 23 years old, but otherwise a very diverse group, for example they were enrolled in various disciplines and one was Congolese. Some of them were clearly ‚Model C‘[14] educated while others struggled a bit to express themselves confidently in English. In the role plays that problem was easily solved as participants switched to isiZulu and back, but in the discussion I felt that it sometimes might have inhibited people from speaking up. As the facilitator, I tried to encourage people but was also careful not to put pressure on somebody who might prefer an observing role. Everybody though, even if not speaking a lot, was very involved in the discussions, voicing or gesturing agreement and disagreement and commenting from time to time.

I find it noteworthy that there were at least two different opinions expressed on each topic discussed which seemed to point to the level of confidence participants felt during the workshop, an observation that was supported later by the interview respondents. Although some participants were naturally more outspoken than others, there was no ‚thought leader‘ who dictated what everybody else had to think or say. Although it had disadvantages, I thought that the fact that most participants didn't know each other very well might have been an advantage here, because there was no established hierarchy in the group and on different topics different people were speaking the most.

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[14] During apartheid ‚Model C‘ schools were the schools for the white children. Although now racially integrated ―to this day former Model C schools still typically have the best facilities, best teachers and best educational opportunities for children" (my-cape-town-south-africa.com).

Two of the most outspoken participants were also S.A.R.A.H. members, but during the workshop they clearly identified with the other participants and, more importantly, were seen as one of them. Because of their involvement with this student society they had clearly reflected on some of the issues before, but I did not feel that their contributions _overwhelmed' the other participants. This was firstly, because some other participants spoke just as much and also because they sometimes contradicted each other. If anything, their involvement probably encouraged the other participants to speak up too. I also did not feel that it _falsified' the findings since the opinions voiced were always shared by some other participants who showed their agreement.

When they first came, most of the participants expected a guided discussion or even a lecture (see analysis of interviews below) so the first two activities, taking the shoes off and _Laughing Round' (see Chapter Three, 3 & 4), were clearly unexpected. However, everybody decided to go along with it, although some looked very sceptical at first. This scepticism disappeared when they started having fun. The _Laughing Round' is a low focus exercise, so nobody felt they were _put on the spot' while at the same time being given the freedom to act _silly' and laugh out loud.

It was this enjoyment that clearly carried them through the introduction round afterwards, a high focus exercise (Chapter Three, 5). Although some were a bit uncomfortable with having to stand up and _perform' in front of the group, they all eventually did so with encouragement from the facilitator and the group. Some clearly enjoyed the spotlight and made the group laugh with their renditions of _eating' or _sleeping'. In general, there was a lot of good-natured laughter which relaxed everybody (see analysis of interviews below).

The walking exercise (Chapter Three, 6) was clearly inhibited a bit by the lack of space, but otherwise went well. While some participants were less than enthusiastic about it, others clearly enjoyed moving and experiencing their body, especially when they were asked to walk in slow motion.

As shown by this and the following exercises, AT as a research method is different from others also because it involves the whole body and uses it and its movements as data (see discussion in Chapter Five). It was clear that this was seen as strange at first but later appreciated by most participants (see analysis of interviews below).

The following 1-2-3 game (Chapter Three, 7) was at first a bit confusing, and I realised that my directions had not been clear, so I stopped it and explained again. The second time it worked very well and by now all the participants enjoyed themselves again, often becoming wildly inventive with their movements.

Following this cooperative game was a trust exercise in which one partner had to lead the other ‚blind' one (Chapter Three, 8). I had originally planned to only do this exercise after some more cooperative warm-up games (which had to be cut due to time constraints) and was sceptical if it would work well so early in the workshop. However, all of the participants earned their partners' trust, watching out for them and generally taking their responsibility seriously. This meant in turn that almost all of the participants really had their eyes closed and let themselves be guided, a fact that spoke to the maturity of the group, since this, in my experience of conducting workshops, is not always the case. Some participants seemed to find the experience scary, while others obviously enjoyed it. I regretted afterwards that I forgot to ask everybody to reflect on the experience and to express their thoughts about it, on the one hand because it would have been interesting to me as researcher/ facilitator and on the other hand because it would have made the participants themselves more conscious of their experience.

After this relatively quiet and focused exercise, the participants were asked for the first time to act out a short scenario. I asked them to stay in pairs and gave them various situations to quickly improvise (Chapter Three, 9). At first, everybody was a bit unsure about what was expected, but once the participants realised that there was no ‚right' and ‚wrong' and they could act in whatever way the liked, they enjoyed themselves tremendously, creating over-the-top characters. Also, since every pair acted at the same time, nobody was watching each other, and everybody felt brave enough to ‚perform'. Of

course, some pairs were very loud and others more reticent, but everybody swopped characters when asked to.

There was also a lot of laughing, especially when a woman had to play a man or a man a woman, since some of the pairs were of the same sex. It was especially interesting to see how participants (both male and female) acted out ‗a guy chatting up a girl' and ‗a girl chatting up a guy', clearly employing different mannerisms and tactics when representing a man or woman.

The S.A.R.A.H. member filming the workshop later remarked that the way participants acted out the given roles, was in itself data for their purposes since it portrayed the expected gender roles openly (see interview with S1). I later wished though that in addition I had asked the participants what they were discussing about when portraying the two friends in a big argument, which would have given S.A.R.A.H. more data to work with and them a chance to reflect and share.

While the idea of acting out a little scene seemed familiar to everybody, image theatre obviously was not and some of the participants found it at first strange that they should not move or talk (see Chapter Three, 10). Some of the concepts they were asked to make an image of, like hunger and fear, they found easy to portray, probably because there are gestures that most people will recognise as such. When making an image of love and of coffee though, some had to think harder. The last image was ‗friendship' and a few people automatically chose to work with the person next to them because they found this concept impossible to portray on their own.

This led to the image of a ‗true friendship' that everybody was asked to create together with the person next to him or her and show it to the group who then commented on it. This was the first time after the introductory circle that the participants were watching

each other, but nobody felt inhibited.[15] Usually, with more time, the participants are then guided by the facilitator to explore concepts not directly shown but implied by the image. Because of time restraints, this did not happen and limited therefore the range of responses.

However, there was lot of hilarity, for example when a man and woman hugged, with some people commenting it looked more like desire than friendship, but also when two men hugged. These comments then led to a discussion around the questions whether a friendship between men is different than a friendship between women and whether men and women can be ‚just friends' (see comparative analysis below).

From those debates then arose the questions of whether one can control one's feelings and whether one is to blame if one develops feelings for another person and cheats on his or her partner (see transcript below). I was a bit shocked by the vehemence with which some participants asserted that one was not to blame when cheating because you ‚can't control your feelings'. This seemed especially interesting later, when it became clear that a lot of the problems in relationships arose because of (perceived) unfaithfulness.

In retrospect, it would have probably helped the debate if the facilitator had made clear the difference between feelings and actions, but I was not thinking of that at the time and felt pressured by time to move on to the next exercise, thinking we could have a similar discussion later when speaking about challenges in relationships. AT therefore enables the researcher to use the themes flexibly, connecting thoughts that arose at different points in the process that challenge or support each other. Of course, that demands of the facilitator to ‚think on his or her feet' and have clarity of focus.

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[15] This is an experience I made again and again in AT workshops: although role plays or little improvised scenes are often easier to create than an image, participants feel more confident ‚performing' the latter, probably because they do not think of it as a performance, but as an exercise.

To illustrate the organic nature of the discussion during the workshop and the role the researcher/facilitator played, I include here a relatively lengthy excerpt of the workshop transcript.

Transcript of workshop, question "Can men and women be just friends?"
(R = researcher, F = female, M = male, [*general comments/actions from the group]*)

- **R:** So, you showed us a friendship between a man and a woman. Do you think it's possible to have 'just friendship' between a man and a woman?
- *[General discussion, some people start voicing their opinions loudly]*
- **R:** Ok, I want to hear from different people. [*Various participants put their hands up]*
- **M1:** Not possible! [*Disagreement from various participants, including his neighbours, M2 and F1, this distracts M1 a bit]*
- **R:** Why? [*calming participants]* Let's first hear one point and then another.
- **M1:** I'm just speaking from what I know. When you get too close… [*gestures with hands]*
- **R:** What happens when you get too close? What do you think?
- **M3:** They finish by… [*blows a kiss, general laughter]*
- **M1:** When you get too close you end up developing feelings.
- **F2:** I think they can be friends. Because it depends on how close your relationship is. As friends if you know it's not going to be more than friends, then you stop it from being more than just friends. And you will be just friends.
- **R:** Can you stop it? [*General agreement/disagreement]*
- **F2:** You can!
- **F3:** I say you can because I've been friends with this guy for six years [*F2: Exactly*!] and we're very close. People think we're lovers when they see us walking. We're like 'hey love' [*demonstrates linking arms with partner*]. We do everything… well, not everything everything [*group laughs*]. His girlfriends know me. Sometimes they get angry but we've been friends for so long. So you can be friends.
- **M4:** I support that one because I also have a friend for so long. She's a girl. She always supports me when I need help. Whenever I need someone to talk to I go to her. Her boyfriend knows me. So even late at night if I want to see her and she's ready to see me she can come see me.
- **R:** Are girls different in a relationship than guys?
- **M5:** Yeah, when you think about it, two girls, the dynamic of the relationship changes completely, cause with two girls it's like 'oh let's sleep together, oh let's bond together' [*gesturing 'girly', group laughs*] cause you are girls like that, you know you're tight [*women around him agree]*. But if it's a guy and a girl there's limitations. You said it's just platonic but you can't control feelings. Feelings are just one of those things that can't be controlled. It could be that you and your guyfriend are in denial [*general laughter].*
- **F4:** I think you can control your feelings [*some people: 'Yeah']*. It's a choice, a choice. Every action, you choose to do, the action, it's a conscious choice.
- **M5:** But think about it, why do we say 'falling in love'?
- *[general discussion]*

- **R:** Ok guys, going with controlling your feelings I think this also has to do with… say you are in a relationship and you develop feelings for another person. Are you to blame when you go cheat on your partner?
- **F2 & F5:** No!
- **F4:** What?!
- **R:** Are you not to blame? Why not? Because you can't control it?
- **F2:** I guess, yeah… [*becomes a bit unsure, general discussion*]
- **F4:** You are to blame, because, as I said earlier, you have a choice whether to do it or not [*agreement is heard*].
- **M5:** But think about it this way, if you can control your feelings why don't we choose the people we are with? One example: You would break up one relationship just to be in another relationship. And why? Because you see better potential there and because you've already developed feelings for that person. If it was that way we wouldn't cheat.

This excerpt also illustrates some of the characteristics of this interactive research method, for example that the research effort itself is changing the ‚playing field'. In other words the respondents might change their mind and answer the same question differently at different stages throughout the workshop. There was even a participant who, when interviewed, said that although he meant what he said at the time of the workshop, he now believes this to be false. Does that mean that the data he helped produce during the workshop have now become invalid? Of course not, it just shows that, when researching human beings, one never deals in certainties, only approximations.

Another feature closely linked to this one is that often participants not only contradict each other but even themselves. For example, in the transcript above, F2 argues first that one can stop a friendship between a man and a woman from becoming more than that, but a few minutes later she said that somebody was not to blame for cheating if he or she developed feelings for somebody else. This means that she first argued that somebody can control their actions and later that they cannot. Being asked to qualify her second opinion by the facilitator, she was not sure anymore.

Other data gathered throughout the workshop also showed some contradictions. For example in the beginning most participants said that women had closer friendships but later some argued that for men a friendship is more important than a relationship and for women it is vice versa. This is something that happens a lot during an interactive AT workshop and, indeed, is supposed to happen, since AT used in a setting like this, aims to

help question our beliefs and ideas of the world. It is therefore always a ‚research‘ setting, giving the participants the opportunity to define, research and question their beliefs (see discussions in Chapters Two and Five).

For a qualitative researcher however, these contradictions do not invalidate the data gathered in any way, instead they enrich it and the fact that one person changed his or her mind is data in its own way. For S.A.R.A.H.‘s purposes for example this was useful, pointing to the possibility of more exploration in future around the issue of ‚controlling one‘s feelings‘. This is a thought I will expand on in Chapter Five.

After a short and loud burst of energy in the ‚numbers game‘ (Chapter Three, 11) the participants were asked to create short scenes about ‚a relationship gone bad‘ in groups of four (Chapter Three, 12). They were given 10 to 15 minutes to prepare this time and while they all enthusiastically discussed possible scenarios, it needed a lot of encouragement from the facilitator to bring them to perform their scenes in front of each other.

I believe this challenge came up for various reasons, the first being the fact that there was no more time for preparatory exercises, like movement games or little role plays that usually ease participants into the more challenging part of creating their own little ‚play‘. The second reason was precisely that the participants perceived the scenes (although only 20 to 30 seconds long) as a performance. This immediately led to some becoming shy, believing they could not act, although they never had such qualms before, when acting out the small situations in pairs or performing their images. They obviously felt as if they were ‚thrown into the deep end‘ and should have been eased more into this, quite advanced, exercise and given more guidance throughout the process by the facilitator.

Another practical reason was that most of the participants took the creative process as a welcome break from standing and sat on the chairs. This meant that they were often not trying ideas out physically, but mentally, so when it came to performing, they did know

what they wanted to show but not necessarily how, another issue that could have easily been solved by pushing the chairs to the side.

Since none of the participants had any drama experience and the workshop did not focus on imparting performance skills (although that does not mean it did not happen, see analysis of interviews with workshop participants below), there were obviously some technical points that sometimes made it difficult to comprehend everything that was going on in the scenes. For example, many performers turned their backs to the audience and/or spoke very low whereas others spoke loudly but all at the same time so that it sometimes became difficult to listen to the dialogue. Understanding every word was often not that necessary though, because the actions were usually very clear and explained what was going on. Two of the groups also never decided on how or when to end the scene so they simply continued with the same conversation or repeated actions until the facilitator ended the performance.

Although at first shy, eventually all participants performed, even though (since I was aware of the constraints cited above) they had been given the option to simply help create the scene and then watch it. It was interesting to see how many eventually enjoyed standing in front of the group and how the shared experience of having overcome this challenge seemed to create an accepting and open atmosphere conducive to the honest discussion afterwards. The first question I asked after each performance was whether this scenario seemed realistic to the participants and why. In all cases, the behaviour of the characters was deemed realistic and often people spoke about their own or friends' experiences when commenting.

It is also noteworthy that all scenes depicted a problem with (perceived) cheating. Although one reason for this choice might have been its inherent dramatic quality, I do believe that it was a very pertinent issue to the participants since it was not only portrayed in the scenes but spoken about at different times throughout the workshop. Also since all groups created their scenes at the same time, they could not have been influenced by the

performances of the groups before them, which was also evidenced by the fact that every scenario shown was completely different.

The first group who performed showed a scene where a boyfriend found out that his girlfriend cheated on him with his own brother and questions her about this. After a heated argument he starts to beat her up at which point the group chose to end the performance. This group were the most confident and technically adept, two facts that might have reinforced each other. Consisting of two boys and two girls, they decided to portray the same couple by different people, the one pair starting the argument and the other picking it up in the middle just before the beating. To make clear to the audience that the same couple was portrayed, the second pair repeated the last line of the first pair. I was quite surprised at this level of stagecraft and the performers themselves were clearly quite proud of their clever idea. This incident shows that, even when unfamiliar with the form of theatre, people can use it creatively and do not need to undergo specific training to use it as a research method.

In the discussion afterwards, two comments stood out for me. The one was the explanation of the woman's behaviour as ‗seeking attention' and the other one was a statement that this scene portrayed a ‗typical South African man' who always blames the woman and beats her up. I would have liked to have a more in-depth discussion around this generalisation, but decided against it, thinking that it might take us a while to explore thoroughly and that I did not want to take time away from the other groups. I also thought that this might be a good topic for one of S.A.R.A.H.'s planned follow-up workshops. As will be argued in Chapter Five, one of AT's strong points is that is good at identifying possible further areas of investigation.

The second (all-female) group portrayed one woman trying to tell her friend that she saw her boyfriend with another woman and that she thinks he is cheating on her friend. Two other friends then come and ‗protect' their friend, accusing the first woman of lying and having her own agenda. The girlfriend goes with those friends in the end, showing that she agrees with them. While the first scene was quite clear in what it depicted (although

there was a discussion around who is to blame) the audience of this scene was left to make up their own mind whether what the first friend said was true or not. Predictably, the discussion therefore started with the idea that she might have pretended to _protect' her friend out of jealousy or to _steal the boyfriend'. But after the remark that even if friends like her are telling the truth, most women _won't listen', it became a deeper reflection on the reasons women have to stay in a _bad relationship'. The female need for attention was again emphasised by a number of speakers and it was suggested that if the actors in this scene were male, the boyfriend would have believed his friend. As this scene in particular showed, AT as a research method generates (sometimes very) detailed data that is often already being questioned and re-explained during the research process.

In a way, the continuation of this idea was acted out by the next group which consisted of four men. They portrayed a physical fight between two friends and the attempts by two other friends to break the argument up. The reason given for the fight was that the one friend had slept with the other's girlfriend. Among the various speculations as to why he did that, a group of answers surprised me with the candidness with which some of the (otherwise quite shy) men spoke about using sex as a _weapon' or _game', for example to spite or challenge a friend. The advantage of the scenes here was clearly that everybody felt free to speak about the characters portrayed without having to reveal too much about their own lifestyle choices.

Looking at the _sex for gain' issue from a different point, in the next scene we saw three male friends who go to visit their respective girlfriends only to discover at arrival that it is the same woman. She quickly runs away and the three boyfriends start fighting. Thinking that we already spoke about reasons for cheating when discussing the last two scenes (although here was a completely new angle on it), I decided to guide the discussion back to the debate we had earlier about blame. But instead of asking this time who was to blame, we focussed on the questions who usually gets blamed (whether rightly or wrongly). Most participants agreed that it was generally the woman who gets blamed by both men and women. A few interesting reasons were given for this, among them the

importance men assign to a friendship and, again, the need for women to preserve the relationship.

In retrospect, I feel that I should have continued the debate at this point and even brought it back to the ‚who is to blame' discussion we had earlier, but at that moment I felt the issues raised led more readily to another discussion. I therefore questioned the participants about whether there was any pressure felt to be in a relationship. There were some interesting, often contradictory, answers, for example that it depended on whether you were single by choice or not (one man saying he feels ‚free' without a girlfriend) with other participants asserting that nobody would choose to be single. I found it noteworthy that although a lot of their comments pointed to social pressure (especially on girls) to have a partner, only one person answered in the affirmative when I asked whether there was any pressure at all. Most participants seemed undecided on and uninterested in this question. I think this was due to a few factors: Firstly, although not said openly, the discussion had clearly shifted from speaking about the characters portrayed and ‚some people' to speaking about their own situation and feelings. I observed that this was inhibiting for some. Secondly, the discussion should have probably started out with defining ways in which social pressure can be communicated and felt, so that everybody shared the same understanding. As it was, I had the feeling some of the participants could not really imagine what was meant by ‚pressures'. And thirdly, independent of the topic, some participants started to lose focus, because they had to go soon and did not want to miss the bus.

As a final exercise therefore, I asked for some reflections and especially some suggestions for future S.A.R.A.H. activities. All of the feedback voiced was positive and everybody seemed happy to take part in any future events, with some participants giving quite detailed suggestions. After the formal goodbyes to the people who had to leave, this discussion was then continued informally among the remaining participants and S.A.R.A.H. members while sharing supper.

Given the constraints of this workshop, namely the short space of time, the unfamiliarity of the participants with AT and that most of them did not know each other well, I was positively surprised by the results. The enthusiasm of the participants, their willingness to try out _strange' things and their openness in sharing their opinions was truly remarkable. They clearly felt safe and enjoyed themselves and so did I, feeling regret when I had to cut an interesting discussion short.

It was my first experience conducting an AT workshop whose main objective was data collection and I found it a challenge. My main issue was that I felt I had to cover all or at least most of the questions given to me by S.A.R.A.H. which meant I could not pursue ideas raised as deeply as I would have liked at times. I think the most outstanding feature for me was the feeling of community the workshop created in such a short space of time, a point also made again and again by the participants (see analysis of interviews below).

Is there a difference? A comparative analysis of the answers given in the workshop to those of the questionnaires

To establish further whether AT is a viable method of inquiry for qualitative research, the data collected will be compared to that collected through a questionnaire. In this section I will therefore look at the questions that were asked both in the workshop and the questionnaires and the answers given in each case as well as the discussions those questions gave rise to. Since the focus of this study is AT as a research method, accepting a questionnaire as a well-established data gathering tool, the reflection on the former will necessarily be more in-depth than that on the latter.

The first question that was asked both in the questionnaire and during the workshop was ―What do you like to do to relax in your free time?" A straightforward and easy to answer question that was meant to put the participants at ease with the process as well as provide useful information about popular activities. During the workshop, this question was answered by the participants when they stepped into the middle of the circle, introduced themselves and performed the action of their favourite activity (see Chapter Three, 1e).

The answers to this question illustrated very well how dependent the answer given often is on the data collection method employed. While a few of the answers given were the same, namely ‚listening to music', ‚chatting with friends', ‚dancing' and ‚reading', it is interesting that some activities of the one group were never mentioned by the other.

In general, the group responding to the questionnaire while sitting in their rooms, thought more about indoors activities like ‚watching movies or tv', ‚playing computer games', ‚staying in my room' and ‚surfing the internet' while the participants in the workshopseemed to remember more physical activities like ‚playing football' and ‚dancing' and chose easy-to-portray actions like ‚eating' and ‚sleeping'.

Given that all respondents stayed at the same residence with similar lifestyle choices available to them and that the answers given were nothing out of the ordinary, this is noteworthy, since it points to the conclusion that the responses depended on the method of inquiry. Does that mean that the answers of one group or the other were less valid? As I argue below, I do not think so.

Although it was the bigger group, the workshop participants gave less diverse answers, which had an obvious reason: some of them saw what another person did and thought it was a good idea. I learned during the interviews, however, that some of the questionnaire respondents were discussing the questions as they were answering it, which may have influenced their answers as well.

This raises some interesting questions: if the answers sourced through both methods were not necessarily the first ones that came to mind, but were ‚inspired' by a comment or action of somebody else, does that mean they were less true? For the purposes of this research I believe it does not matter whether the answers given were on ‚first -' or ‚second thought', they all portrayed the hobbies of the participants truthfully. For example, while participant 2 in the workshop might not have thought of ‚football' by himself and chose to portray it after seeing participant 1 doing it and because it was an

action easier to portray than, say, ‗playing video games', he still likes playing football in his free time.

Table 1a & 1b: What do you like to do to relax in you free time?

1a - Questionnaire:

	Going for a walk		Watching movies or tv		Listening to music		Chatting with friends		Playing computer games	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	4	44	4	44	1	11	2	22	-	-
Male	1	33	1	33	2	66	1	33	2	66
Total	5	42	5	42	3	25	3	25	2	17
	Reading		Staying in my room		Surfing the internet		Going out with Boy/ Girlfriend		Dancing	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	2	22	1	11	-	-	1	11	1	11
Male	-	-	-	-	1	33	-	-	-	
Total	2	17	1	8	1	8	1	8	1	8

1b - Workshop:

	Playing Football		Writing		Dancing		Eating		Sleeping	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	-	-	2	29	1	14	1	14	1	14
Male	4	44	-	-	1	11	1	11	1	11
Total	4	25	2	13	2	13	2	13	2	13
	Reading		Sms/Mxit etc		Listening to music		Chatting with friends			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Female	1	14	1	14	1	14	-	-		
Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	11		
Total	1	6	1	6	1	6	1	6		

One of the questions posed in the questionnaire was ―How would you describe a bad friendship? (e.g. what do bad friends do or say to each other?)". Most of the respondents saw gossip and not caring as signs of a bad friendship, with a third also mentioning ‗being a bad influence', arguing as well as disrespect. In the workshop this question was not posed to the whole group but they were asked to act out in pairs ‗two best friends arguing' (see Chapter Three, 1i). Since the participants did not look at each other's role play and comment on it, there was no data gathered during this process. Even on the

video of the event, it is not possible to see what exactly the ‚friends' were arguing about since everybody made a lot of noise. In the workshop this question was used as a basis for a (mental and physical) warm-up exercise rather than an important question in its own right.

Another question was ―How would you describe a good friendship? (e.g. what do real friends do for each other or say to each other?)". In the workshop this was posed by asking the participants to pair up and to make an image of ‚real friendship' (see Chapter Three, 1j).

The answers given in the questionnaire were quite detailed (see table 2a), especially the women respondents often gave multiple answers, clearly giving the question some thought. The workshop participants' images portrayed much less (see table 2b), but in the discussion that followed each image, some more detailed views were aired. These comments cannot be quantified, because in the setting of an interactive discussion there was general agreement aired to them all, they are therefore simply listed (see below table 2b).

Still, taking this into account, none of the workshop participants mentioned ‚meaningful communication', ‚respect' and ‚good advice' that were all quite important to the questionnaire respondents. I believe there are two reasons for this. The first one is that the workshop participants, due to time constraints, had much less time to think about this question. They were given approximately 30 seconds to think of an image and 10 – 30 seconds to respond to each. That means there were also very little guiding questions from the facilitator like ―How do you think this man feels about his friend?". The second one is that the concept of ‚images' was completely new to probably all of them, they had just learnt about it in the previous five minutes. Most of them therefore portrayed very ‚real' situations like two friends greeting or hugging each other, and only two pairs portrayed a bit more abstract situations of ‚support'.

It is important to note here, that, while this question was given the same weight as all others in the questionnaire, it was treated as less important in the workshop, because I was more interested in the questions that ‚spun out' from the observations given as well as getting to the questions about relationships since that was what S.A.R.A.H. was interested in most. For example, the amused reactions of the students to the portrayals of a close friendship between two men and between a man and a woman organically led to the next two questions: ―Are men and women different in a friendship?" and ―Can men and women be ‚just friends'?". The first question was discussed for a bit with most of the participants agreeing that women, in general, are ‚closer' physically and tend to express their affection more openly. It also came up again in the discussion about ‚just friends'.

Tables 2a & 2b: How would you describe a good friendship?

2a - Questionnaire:

	Supportive & Caring (love & affection)		Meaningful Communication (e.g. future, motivation)		Honesty & Openness		Trust & Trustworthiness	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	7	78	6	67	4	44	4	44
Male	3	100	1	33	-	-	-	-
Total	10	83	7	58	4	33	4	33
	Respect		Offer good advice		Laugh together			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Female	4	44	3	33	1	11		
Male	-	-	-	-	1	33		
Total	4	33	3	25	2	17		

2b - Workshop (8 pairs):

	Happy to see each other		Affection		Supportive & Caring		Laughing together	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Total	4	50	4	50	2	25	1	13

Answers given in discussion:
- Laughing with each other
- Happy to see each other
- Love
- Affection
- Support
- Trust
- Wanting to be close to each other

From there it was a logical step to ask the workshop participants about the possibility of men and women being ‚just friends', which started a very lively debate with various participants not only voicing their views but also, since they were standing, ‚demonstrating' (see transcript in narrative analysis above). Different positions were brought forward and the participants not speaking were nevertheless very involved in the discussion, showing their agreement or disagreement through gestures.

In both, the questionnaire and the workshop, most participants answered this question with ‚yes', except for a male minority. Interesting to note is that two of the female questionnaire respondents gave conditions for the functioning of such a friendship, namely ‚as long as the guy does not take advantage of you'. This was a point not raised by the workshop group which was more concerned with the question of controlling one's feelings. Other than that, the answers given were very much alike, saying things such as ‚Yes, because it's all in the mind' and ‚No, because if you get close emotionally, you eventually get close physically'.

In the workshop, this discussion then led onto other ones namely ―Can one control the feelings one has for another?" and ―Is one to blame if one develops feelings for another person and cheats on his or her partner?" (see transcript in the narrative analysis above). This question was hotly debated with participants arguing both in the affirmative and the negative, but was cut short by the facilitator, planning to continue the discussion later during the ‚bad relationship' role plays. This happened partially, focussing the discussion more around blame assigned rather than control. It is important to note here that his question was not asked in the questionnaire since it arose out of the previous answers of the workshop participants.

The next item on the questionnaire was ―How would you describe a good romantic relationship?" and most of the answers centred on the need for the relationship to be supportive, loving and caring as well as the necessity of good and meaningful communication. Important were also honesty, openness and trust. It is interesting though that the questionnaire respondents did not mention being faithful and (in the next

question) cheating very often. This is especially noteworthy when one compares this to the constant presence of cheating as a relationship problem in the workshop group.

This was a question that was not asked in the workshop for various reasons. In an early design of the workshop, it was planned to have the participants first answer the question about a bad relationship with images and then, together, change them to positive ones, which would have answered the question about the positive relationship. This exercise was cut firstly because of time constraints, secondly because I felt there was a lot of image theatre and not enough role play in the workshop and thirdly, because this was a research workshop, not a solution-finding workshop and S.A.R.A.H. was more interested in ‗issues' that could be used in the envisioned follow-up workshops (in which, with more time, solutions could then be discussed).

The following question, ―How would you describe a bad romantic relationship?" was therefore the one given the most time in the workshop, with relatively lengthy discussions in between the role plays (see Chapter Three, 1l and outline of transcript below). In the questionnaire it was given the same weight as all other questions. Here, most respondents said fighting or ‗bad communication' is worst in a relationship with the women also being concerned about abuse and ‗disrespect' whereas all of the men said cheating was a sign of a bad relationship.

In the workshop, this was the most prevalent theme, since every one of the four scenes that the participants created and performed somehow dealt with (perceived) unfaithfulness. Otherwise the scenes and following discussions yielded similar answers as the questionnaire but when the group attempted to answer why these situations arose, issues came up that might have been implied by some of the workshop respondents but were never directly mentioned.

These ‗deeper topics' included the opinion that at the heart of a lot of women's (self-) destructive behaviour, like cheating, staying with a ‗bad' boyfriend or being selfish and attention seeking, lies often low self-esteem and the need to feel loved and ‗special'.

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Another interesting point that came up was that for most men friendships seem more important than relationships and for women it is often the other way round. This results in the impression that most of the time it is the woman who gets blamed (by both men and women) if somebody cheats. Representatives of both sexes, however, may feel under pressure to have a boy/girlfriend and treat sex sometimes as a ‗tool' and/or ‗game', albeit in different ways.

Table 3 - How would you describe a bad romantic relationship?

Questionnaire:

	Bad communication, fighting		Cheating		Abuse (physical & emotional)		Disrespect (sex object, 'paying back', unequal)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	4	44	1	11	4	44	4	44
Male	1	33	3	100	-	-	-	-
Total	5	42	4	33	4	33	4	33
	No trust		Dishonesty		Selfishness		Based on sex	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Female	1	11	1	11	-	-	1	11
Male	1	33	1	33	1	33	-	-
Total	2	17	2	17	1	8	1	8

Workshop (four groups of four):

Scene 1: Boyfriend found out his girlfriend is cheating on him with his own brother, heated argument, beats her up.

- Violence
- Bad communication
- Woman always seeks attention
- A 'typical South African man' blames the woman and beats her up when he finds that she has cheated on him

Scene 2: One girl tries to tell her friend that she saw her boyfriend with another girl and that she thinks he's cheating on her, then two other girls come and ‗protect' the girlfriend by accusing the first girl of lying and having her own agenda, girlfriend believes them, not the first friend.

- Sometimes girls pretend to 'protect' their friends, but have their own agenda, i.e. they want to break up the relationship because of jealousy or because they like the boyfriend themselves.
- Usually, if her friends say that her boyfriend is not good for her, a woman does not listen, but remains with the guy even if it is a bad relationship.
- Question: Why? Because…
  - o She thinks she knows him better.
  - o She thinks he'll come back to her.
  - o She loves him.

- o Of low self-esteem.
- o He gives her attention.
- o He makes her feel special.
- o He treats her in a way nobody else is treating her.
- o She keeps telling herself that he'll change.
- Question: Will he change? Answer: In most cases he won't.
- If the situation is reversed and men tell their friend his girlfriend is cheating on him, he believes them.

Scene 3: Two friends fighting, one slept with the other's girlfriend, two other friends try to stop the fight.

Question : Why would he do that?
Maybe…
- He's the boyfriend's roommate, girlfriend comes and finds him instead of boyfriend and doesn't really care who she's sleeping with.
- The two men's friendship is going through a 'rough patch', they've been arguing and he does it to spite his friend, out of revenge, showing: 'I can get your girlfriend'.
    - o Women also use sex as a weapon, e.g. one day she breaks up with her boyfriend, the next she's got a 'random guy' on her arm, just to make him jealous.
    - o But with women there are usually more feelings involved.
    - o Not always.
- Boyfriend and girlfriend had a 'fake relationship' with no honesty and trust.
- One man challenged the other: 'You can't get her'.
- One man boasted about his girlfriend's skills in bed.
    - o Men talk too much about sex to other men, they brag too much.
    - o Women talk too, but they don't challenge each other that way.

Scene 4: Three friends go to visit their girlfriends, when they arrive they realise it's the same woman. She quickly runs away and they start fighting.

- Question: Do we usually find out if somebody is cheating on us? Answer: Yes.
- Question: What do we do when we find out?
    - o Girls try to ignore it, for reasons discussed above.
    - o Guys don't ignore it.
- Question: Who do we blame?
    - o Guys blame guys, especially if they were friends: 'You took my woman'.
    - o No, guys usually blame girls.
        - ▪ Why?
        - ▪ She consented.
        - ▪ Friendship is more important than a relationship: 'You can always get another girlfriend, you can't as easily get another good friend'.
            - For girls usually the relationship is more important than the friendship.
            - So they blame the other woman: 'She stole him'.
- Question: If you're a girl and don't have a boyfriend do you ask yourself 'What's wrong with me'? Answer: NO! YES!
- Question: If you're a boy and don't have a girlfriend how do you feel?
    - o FREE!
    - o But some people think it's wrong and that you're scared of girls.
- Question: Do people feel pressure to have a boy/girlfriend?

- o Depending on whether it's by choice or not, if people ask you out but you say no, it's ok, but if nobody asks you out you feel bad and ask yourself: 'Is something wrong with me?'.
- o You don't choose to be single!
- o Sometimes people who choose to remain single become judgmental towards others when their relationship has issues.
- Question: So who feels more pressure? Is there pressure at all? Answer: Not sure...

The last three questions of the questionnaire were focused on life as a student in residence, since that was the proposed place for the envisioned S.A.R.A.H. activities. Due to time constraints, this section had to almost completely be cut from the workshop whose participants only answered the last question in a quick reflection round at the end. But also the questionnaire respondents seemed to have little time or energy left when it came to the last questions and mostly answered them very briefly or not at all.

The first of the three questions was: ―Did you ever experience problems with a friendship/relationship in res?‖ and one quarter of the questionnaire respondents answered in the affirmative, with one woman reporting abuse by her ex-boyfriend, another one feeling judged by others and a man saying that a friend betrayed him, without giving any more details.

The next question was ―Do you have any other things you'd like to discuss to do with life or conditions in your residence?‖ and while there were only two answers given, those were very candid describing similar problems. One woman reported that there was pressure on female students to lose their virginity and one man spoke of the pressure to be known to be involved in a relationship which led to students get involved in relationships ‗they do not seem comfortable with'. It is interesting that this is exactly the topic that was discussed by the workshop group too, with people arguing for and against the truth of this perception.

The last question in both the questionnaire and the workshop was ―Do you think a student society like S.A.R.A.H. should be active in res? If so, what should they do?‖ and everybody who responded said yes. In the questionnaire, some people suggested individual counselling for students with problems as well as general awareness

programmes about _dangerous things'. Interestingly, a third of the questionnaire respondents said that racism and discrimination was a problem in residence. Since this particular residence (according to the workshop participants) had an all-black African population they might have meant tribalism or xenophobia.

Both, the participants in the workshop and the questionnaire respondents, said that they would like regular workshops on various issues (relationships, abuse, gender equality, sex, finances) as well as programmes to help the residents get to know each other and have fun together. Clearly enjoying the idea of follow-up events, the workshop participants as well as one questionnaire respondent also suggested practical measures to reach the biggest possible number of students.

Feedback sessions: Analysis of the follow-up in-depth interviews

For the feedback sessions, I used one-on-one open-ended interviews that were fairly standardised, asking the same questions every time (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 204; see appendices 3 to 5). Sometimes I varied the order though or asked a follow-up question to clarify a point a respondent was making. I interviewed six questionnaire respondents and five workshop participants about their experience during the research process as well as three S.A.R.A.H. members of whom two were participating in the workshop and the third was filming, therefore observing, it.

In this section I will at first examine the answers of the workshop participants and the questionnaire respondents individually before contrasting their responses about their attitudes at the beginning and the end of the research process. In Chapter Five I will discuss their answers in more detail with regard to the benefits for the research subjects that are gained when using AT as a research method   For reasons of anonymity, I will

not mention the names of the interviewees but refer to them as Q1 – Q6 (questionnaire respondents), WP1 – WP5 (workshop participants) and S1 – S3 (S.A.R.A.H. members)[16].

„The control group": Interviews with questionnaire respondents

Five out of six of the interviewees in this group said that they answered the questionnaire because they were interested in the topic ‚Relationships' and a third said that they could relate to it because of personal experiences. In addition to this again five out of six said that they felt a responsibility to answer, because they felt they could help and they would like to ‚become involved'. Only one person hoped to gain from the experience. Other reasons to respond to the questionnaire included the fact that it came from S.A.R.A.H. and they had heard about the society before, a link to their studies and the feeling that they were free to say what they liked.

All interviewees said that the questionnaire was different than expected. Two main reasons were given for this. The first one concerned the nature of the questions, with many respondents saying they did not expect open-ended questions of a private matter covering such a wide range of topics. The second was mentioned by a third of the interviewees who expressed their surprise at having gained from the process because the questionnaire made them think about the topic afterwards and even started a discussion among one respondent's roommates about relationships.

This is a point that was reiterated by two thirds of the respondents when asked how they felt while answering the questionnaire. One person for example said that he ‒thought about [his] relationship with [his] girlfriend" (Q4) and another that it ‒opened my eyes" since ‒some of the questions were new to me" (Q3). Again two thirds of the respondents reported a feeling of achievement since they felt free to answer all the questions (something that was seen as brave) and thought they answered them well with one person also linking his thoughts about the questions to his studies.

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[16] I am aware that the usual referencing method includes the date of the interview. I felt however that my text became too cluttered. All of the interviews took place from 14 October till 27 October 2009.

Similar points were also given as reasons for the correct answering of the questions. All respondents said that their ―answers in the questionnaire accurately portray [their] thoughts and feelings on the subject in question" (see Appendix 3, interview structure), with a third of the interviewees being eager to confirm that it was their opinion they expressed (as opposed to somebody else's).

This position was strengthened again when all respondents said that they would be happy to use a questionnaire like this as a researcher since it allows for people to answer their questions in private and to think as long as they like about them, reasons that were thought to produce truthful answers. All respondents therefore believed the questionnaire had been beneficial for the researchers (S.A.R.A.H.) since it produced ‗useful' answers. Interestingly, a third of the interviewees said that they would use a questionnaire like this as researchers since it was also beneficial for the respondents because ―it opens your mind" (Q4) and can generate discussion.

This point moved into focus when the interviewees were asked if there was anything they ‗took home' from the experience of answering the questionnaire. Except one person, all reported that they continued thinking about the topic and half of the group said that they discussed it with other people. One person also mentioned that it connected to and supported what he had learned in his studies.

When given the opportunity to give some more comments or suggestions, a third of the respondents said they felt that the questionnaire was beneficial to them, encouraging them to think and speak about the topic. In addition one person suggested another issue he felt should be covered, namely that some women in residence engaged in ‗sex for gain' with men who picked them up in cars. This is interesting because it was one topic S.A.R.A.H. expected to hear about in the workshop but which was never mentioned there, a fact I will investigate more in Chapter Five.

„The researched":Interviews with workshop participants

The first question in these interviews, as with the questionnaire respondents, was why the interviewees had decided to take part in the process. Four out of five said that they were not sure what to expect but thought they would ‚have a look' and give it a try with one person mentioning that her friend insisted she come. Two out of five each said that they took part because they liked the topic and that they hoped to learn something. Two also knew that it was organised by S.A.R.A.H. which made them expect some useful information. Two respondents stressed that they saw the workshop as a chance to interact with other students, one explaining further that he hoped this would help them face the problems that arise staying in a residence.

All of the respondents thought that the workshop would involve sitting down and discussing or even just listening to somebody, ‑like a lecture" (WP5) and were positively surprised by the form it took. Three out of five mentioned that they especially liked that ‑everyone was free to express his or her view" (WP1) and two people found it ‑fun" (WP3) and ‑exciting" (WP5).

These were also the emotions that were mostly cited when the respondents were asked about their feelings when participating in the workshop. Although a majority said that they were at first a bit sceptical towards the methodology and found it challenging at times, they said they ultimately all joined because they enjoyed it. Specific reasons given for this enjoyment were that they ‑felt free to express" themselves (WP4) and that the exercises were relaxing. The vast majority also stressed the fact that it got them to interact with their fellow students and created unity even though people were disagreeing (WP1). In addition, one person said participating helped her remember everything they did and spoke about in the workshop and another person specifically outlined how AT had helped him ―to experience different roles" and learned to empathise with other people (WP1).

In the same vein all of the interviewees thought that the AT exercises helped the research process rather than hindered it. A majority attributed this to the fact that the fun and relaxing exercises left them feel free to talk. Another reason put forward by three out of five respondents was that the AT methodology ―opens your mind‖ (WP5) with one person specifying that seeing and taking part in the exercises helped to show and understand the ―different aspects of relationships‖ (WP2).

This was also supported by an answer given to the question what the participants thought the strengths of the AT method was, when one respondent said she felt ―it was good to visualize, so we got a better understanding of it‖ (WP2). Speaking less about the topic, and more about the form the workshop took, another person felt that, although at the beginning he sometimes thought an exercise was ―weird‖ he ―understood afterwards why we did what we did‖ (WP5), giving as an example the trust exercise (see Chapter Three, 1h).

According to two other people the strength of AT was that it engaged everybody and made them participate, because it was fun instead of boring. Due to this universal participation, many different positions were freely expressed, a fact that was again mentioned by two respondents, with one person claiming that it changed the way he views people, since he now understands that ―there are different things that make a person do something, so you must not judge but try to understand why [they did what they did]‖ (WP1). One person also mentioned the facilitator, thinking that due to the AT exercises the pressure on her might have been less ―because people didn‗t get bored, because we were laughing‖ (WP3).

When asked about the disadvantages of AT, two people mentioned the participants‗ unfamiliarity with this form which led to some people being nervous. One of the two suggested that the facilitator explain a bit more the function of each exercise. Another person felt that the content was a bit too broad and should have been more focused. One person did not criticise anything that happened but said that it should happen more often

to ―play like a child and open your mind" and involve more people. The other two respondents could not think of any disadvantages.

All of the interviewees said that their responses in the workshop accurately portrayed their thoughts and feelings on relationships, with two people stressing again that they ―felt free to express me and my thoughts" (WP3) since ―there was no-one to say there's a right or wrong answer but everyone's opinion was valued" (WP2). Although one person conceded that in a group some people might feel pressured to ―not stand up to what they believe in" (WP3), two respondents specifically said that they felt what everybody ―said and did that day was honest" (WP4). One person explained he believed people ―didn't give a fake answer because after you do whatever it was that we were doing you really feel it and then you give the true answer that is inside you" (WP5).

When asked if they, as a researcher, would use AT as a research method, all of the respondents answered in the affirmative, reiterating many of the points made above. Two people said that they found this method particularly useful when working with their age group. However, one person said that he would try to involve more people and another one qualified that he would use it as one method among many because some people might not be telling the truth in a group.

Notwithstanding this thought, all respondents believed that S.A.R.A.H. got ―truthful' and valuable data from their workshop, because people were open. It was also argued that ―there were many different views voiced" (WP2) which was important for the researchers and another person said that he felt they ―portrayed life as it is" (WP1). In addition to this one interviewee pointed out that most people participating were first years, which means that S.A.R.A.H. got opinions from people who will probably still be at university for a few more years.

When asked whether they thought they ―took home' something from the workshop, all interviewees answered in the affirmative, with the vast majority citing their increased interest in and knowledge around the topic about which they continued to think. Also on

the one hand one person explained that it had been an affirmative experience to hear other people agree with him, and on the other four out of five respondents assigned the biggest value to having been given the opportunity to listen to many different perspectives and being now able to take them into account when thinking about the topic.

For the vast majority this opportunity to share ideas did not stop with the workshop though but continued in discussions with friends and roommates afterwards who were told that they ‒missed out". Corresponding to this, three out of five interviewees also felt that their ‒people skills" had improved, two citing better listening skills and one ‒the ability to communicate with other people and getting to be comfortable around other people" while understanding that ‒it's very important to retain your individuality and to be truthful to who you are" (WP2).

This concern was echoed by a respondent who said that it had also make her think ‒about all the different roles one person has to play", clearly making the connection between the format of the workshop with its role plays and her lived reality in which she is ‒a student, a friend" and many others (WP3). Another participant spoke of quite a profound realisation that ‒if there's an issue you don't need to complain but you need to do something about it" while at the same time also enjoying the fact that he could ‒be free and just play" (WP1) during the workshop.

When asked if there was anything else they would like the interviewer to know, all respondents said they wanted another workshop like this to be organised, reporting that they had only heard positive feedback from other participants. The reason given by almost all respondents for another workshop was so that other students could benefit from it was well. One person specified that ‒I want more of it to help people as you helped me" since he saw it as his responsibility of his role as a house committee member to ‒bring stuff like this to all my students" (WP5) and another went even further saying that ‒I do believe that as students we must try to help the community at large and that with drama you can try to bring lessons to the people" (WP1).

Comparison of the answers given by the two groups of participants

When comparing the answers of the workshop group and the questionnaire respondents in the interviews, it becomes clear that the form of the data collection influenced the attitude with which they approached their involvement. Whereas the majority of the questionnaire respondents took part ―because I wanted to help" (Q4) and out of a feeling of duty, most of the workshop participants (although a few also wanted to be of use) hoped to gain from the experience.

Throughout the interviews members of both groups expressed surprise that they had also gained and contributed respectively. Some of the questionnaire respondents for example related that ―it made me think" (Q3) and that they spoke with other people about the topic during the research and afterwards, an experience that they felt enriched them.

All of the workshop participants expressed their enjoyment at being free to participate and to voice their own opinions. This seemed to be an affirmative experience for them because it strengthened their self-confidence and made them feel that they had something to contribute.

With this notion they also started feeling a sense of duty towards their community, a sentiment that was at first only expressed by the questionnaire respondents. In fact this feeling of responsibility became one of the most pronounced aspects of the reflections in the interviews and was for example evidenced by the statement of one participant who said that he wanted ―to share about these topics, especially relationships, because you know I see how everybody is living here and what's going on" (WP5). One participant even said that he felt ―as students we must try to help the community at large" (WP1).

Although the feedback still showed that most of the time, questionnaire respondents felt they contributed and workshop participants felt they gained, the two extremes were clearly moving towards each other. On the one hand I was surprised by the fact that about a third of the respondents interviewed experienced the questionnaire as enriching, since I

expected them to have thought about these questions a lot. On the other hand though I had expected that the workshop participants felt the need to contribute during and after the process, since participation is an integral part of AT as used in this case study.

For researchers it is interesting to compare the attitudes with which the research subjects approached their contribution. While it is probably useful to have people join up who are responsible and want to be involved like the questionnaire respondents, it seems the interactive workshop was more attractive to a wider range of participants.

„The research commissioner": Interviews with S.A.R.A.H. members

These interviews had a two-fold, at times overlapping, purpose: the respondents were questioned as the commissioners of the research concerning the data that arose from the workshop and about their experiences as participants and observer of the process. Asked whether they thought that the AT exercises helped the process of investigation, all three interviewees said they thought the method was very useful for their purposes, introducing their society in a fun and relaxed way.

Similarly, the main advantage of AT as a research method was seen by all three S.A.R.A.H. members as its ability to put the participants at ease, ―it got them to a place where they felt safe. They really felt they could say anything and that was quite essential for us" (S2). On the other hand, one interviewee remarked that even though everybody was relaxed, she was ―actually surprised by how focused it was. Like almost every minute of it seemed like it was relevant and gave something to our understanding of the dynamics" (S1).

The S.A.R.A.H. member observing the workshop mentioned that this understanding did not only come about through what participants said in the exercises but also that ―how they interacted with each other revealed so much they didn't even know they were communicating" (S1). She gave the example of conflict resolution and how she observed that the men when acting in role often resorted to violence and the women to conspiracy.

She realised therefore that ―not only were they talking about issues but they were re-enacting the same thing, just in how they talked with each other". At the same time, she felt that some of the enactments, although fictional and in a safe space, helped the participants not only to raise issues but also to work through them.

The S.A.R.A.H. members argued therefore that the active involvement of the participants did not only help them relax and get ―out of their comfort zones" (S3), but that it benefited the participants beyond the workshop. They felt that the workshop was not only ―more fun than they [the participants] thought it was going to be", but that it also seemed to leave them feeling good about themselves, because they were free to voice their opinions in an affirmative atmosphere. S3 suggested that this free exchange of opinions had also ―disturbed some of their [the participants'] opinions" and made them ―question some of their ideas" and S2 felt that the workshop ―showed them that […] you can do it in this way or in that. That in itself achieved so much".

All three respondents stressed the fact that they felt the AT method was useful ―not just for us in getting information, but in them actually getting to interact with each other and talking about these issues" (S1). This was seen as also very useful to them since S.A.R.A.H. at this time planned to organise regular events in this residence, with S3 describing the situation in the following way:

> Mostly I felt that people didn't actually want to talk about these issues, but when they got there they did. And then I felt that they actually wanted to talk a lot more and deeply about serious issues.

When asked about any weaknesses they felt the AT method had, the respondents mentioned the time constraints as well as the fact that it limits the number of possible participants. S3 also commented that she felt some of the participants were a bit confused by the method, which might have been explained a bit better.

None of the respondents mentioned the possibility of participants lying as a weakness and when asked whether they thought the answers had been truthful they all responded in the

affirmative. S2 even believed that it had encouraged people to voice their previously private opinions. However, S1 and S3 still believed that the group dynamic influenced what people said since some for example might have used this opportunity to ‗campaign' for their opinion.

Notwithstanding this notion, all three respondents stressed that they were surprised at how open the participants were and how comfortable they seemed to share ―raw" answers, stating that they ―got more than [they] hoped for" (S2). An interesting comment about her observations of the workshop was made by S1 when she shared that what surprised her in many of the scenes portrayed was their predictability, stating that for example ―it was interesting to see the gender roles so entrenched". She explains this fact partially with the group dynamic, arguing that ―when performing for the group, people have to resort to the things everyone will understand".

In any case, since S.A.R.A.H. did not look for clear-cut answers with this research workshop, but instead hoped that it would raise more questions they could then investigate later with the students, they all thought that the data collected was more useful than what they had expected, precisely because it raised new questions. One example is obviously the gender roles mentioned above which S2 found tied in well with what they had thought about before: ―A lot of the questions we had for this workshop revolved around the ideas of roles in relationships, like what kind of roles do people feel they play in their relationships?". But for him the workshop did not only illustrate **what** the participants thought, but also **how** they thought about issues, often illustrating thought processes through actions and discussion.

S1 asserted that the workshop also helped them prioritise some topics they heard about before, for example that men came on Fridays to ―pick up the girls in fancy cars" but that this was not mentioned once throughout the workshop, whereas other issues were mentioned a lot. In addition she said that although the participants never thought of it as a topic in itself, the way they were talking about relationships had a lot to do with ―the idea of ‗possession' of a partner and then how that possession is protected", an idea that she

felt could be used by S.A.R.A.H. in later events to discuss an issue many students might not be aware of.

I was surprised to hear S2 mention that ―most of the storylines revolved about the female being beaten up", since this was only ever mentioned once. In fact, it was portrayed by the group he was part of during the role play and obviously reflected a concern of his. I realised that his expectations of what should have been covered in the workshop influenced his memory of what was in fact spoken about. Of course, he did not have a written report or a recording and had to rely only on his memory.

Raising and prioritising possible issues was one way the workshop helped the S.A.R.A.H. members to plan new activities in the residence[17], but according to them there were others that had more to do with the form than with the content. One respondent for example said that it had made her realise how the topic of relationships ―is a sensitive issue to talk about and your principles and values come into play" and that some participants therefore ―thought some things can be discussed and some things can't" (S3).

Consequently, it was even more important than with other issues to ―remove the confrontational energy and once you do that then people become more free to talk" (S2), a feat S2 felt the AT method employed had achieved. They also all said that they liked the fact that the participants volunteered their opinions, a method by which the S.A.R.A.H. members not only saw their questions answered but also ―a whole lot of ideas […] pop up that you didn't expect to see" (S2).

Given all that was said above, all three S.A.R.A.H. members concurred that they would use an AT workshop for research purposes again, with one person qualifying she would rather use a larger group because ―with a small group it could go either way" (S3). They also all mentioned that in fact, the workshop had been more than a research effort since

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[17] Unfortunately, because of the above-mentioned inactivity of S.A.R.A.H., these new activities remained hypothetical. It can therefore not be ascertained how useful the data gathered really would have been.

there were already suggestions offered both for solutions for the issues raised and for how S.A.R.A.H. could practically proceed from here. S1 described this in the following way:

> Even though it was not meant to provide solutions, it did have that kind of aspect, like there were some interesting suggestions for us that the participants brought up right at the end. We weren't even looking for something specific yet, but clearly people had been thinking about it and wanted to engage in things, like _What can we do to change this'?

Being asked about their own experiences, not as commissioners of the research, but as participants, the two S.A.R.A.H. members involved mentioned that for them, too, the idea to work with drama had been new and that they enjoyed the experience overall. S2 however, also described that ―it was a bit scary, because it raised a whole lot of questions about me too". He related that he had previously thought these questions resolved on his part, about for example the roles he plays in a relationship. He thought that this experience was probably shared by the other participants and that it ―cultivated a culture of them thinking about issues they had not particularly thought about but that resurface constantly and that they are faced with on a daily basis". He therefore did not think there was anything wrong with the _scary part' and concluded:

> I would definitely take part again, because it's more like a self-discovery journey. You go down to the depths of your soul and what you really, really think. So it was scary, but enlightening on a personal level.

Chapter Five - Evaluation of Applied Theatre as a research method as used in this case study

The aim of this dissertation is to ascertain whether AT is a useful method for qualitative research. I will therefore evaluate the outcomes of the process described in Chapters Three and Four. In my assessment I will take into account parameters of practicality, the content of the data generated, the analysis of this content and finally the relation between researcher and research subjects that this form of investigation engenders.

Practicality

The most obvious challenge of AT as a research method I always felt was time, since all the other instances where I found it used spanned at least a few weeks, often even months of data gathering (Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Peseta, 2007). But in this instance, a workshop of just over one hour (little more than the time respondents took to answer the survey) was nevertheless more effective than the questionnaire in many ways. While there was not enough time to answer all the questions posed to the control group, specifically those concerning life in the residence, the questions that were answered were given a much more thorough examination. Out of this flexible, in-depth method arose many new answers and questions useful for the researcher. Interestingly, almost none of the questionnaire respondents answered these questions either, perhaps feeling time constraints as well.

Due to the participative nature of AT it is necessary to engage with the research subjects in small groups, whereas clearly one can distribute a questionnaire to thousands of people without much effort. This raises the question of how representative studies of this nature can be. It is my position that because of the multi-layered and nuanced answers the researchers get in a short space of time, an AT workshop is actually *very* representative of

the group the research participants are part of, in this case UKZN students in residences. In addition, it can even raise topics that might have been overlooked with more conventional research methods, because they lie deeper and are only unearthed through a process of questioning during the workshop. Finally, in this case study, and in many other instances of research, the participants did not need to be representative of a huge group, say all students in residences throughout South Africa. They did not even need to represent all UKZN students staying in residences. In fact, since they were the group the intervention following the research was planned for, they only needed to represent themselves.

Further, I do not think it is impossible to reach bigger numbers of research subjects with AT. One advantage is that it does not need many resources to facilitate a workshop like the one in the case study. For example, although it helps later analysis, a camera or other recording device is not necessary and can be substituted with field notes. All that is required for an AT workshop is a facilitator and a researcher, who can even be the same person. If the university for example wanted to conduct research workshops like this in all its residences, it would only need to organise facilitators.

And again, this is where this dissertation comes up against the idea of what makes a successful AT facilitator: which skills are essential and how one could impart them most effectively. For example, in the scenario envisioned above, if it was decided for reasons of economy that every workshop should only have one person who is both facilitator and researcher, would it be easier to train researchers as facilitators or vice versa or would it be best to train people unskilled in both in a combination of both? These are all questions beyond the scope of this research, but which are intrinsically linked to the idea of AT as a research method.

Quality of data collected

As shown in the preceding chapter, the content of the data gathered through AT, in particular the answers to the questions posed, was detailed and useful. The fact that there were contradictions in what participants said or in what they did does not invalidate their answers. Neither is the fact that some respondents changed their mind throughout the workshop. I would argue that this and many other instances of seemingly incoherent behaviour during the course of the workshop is in fact a much more truthful depiction of the ‚messiness' of human existence, which is, after all, what a qualitative case study wants to research and understand. One of the respondents recognised this when he said that what the workshop had given S.A.R.A.H. was that the participants ‒portrayed life as it is - as far as possible" (WP1).

In a setting like this, ‚change' therefore is data. Just as the interaction between the participants, their gestures, the way they moved and spoke and even the way they dressed is data that provides information to the researcher. In fact, one could turn the question around and ask whether a non-interactive research method like a questionnaire can ever hope to gather data that is as ‚true to life' as the workshop's.

It is important to bear in mind here that this research does not try to search for ‚the truth', but instead tries to approach the multiple realities of its participants. These are viewed as not simply given, but informed by local, historical and social or interactive parameters (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:260). This stance reflects the underlying postmodern ontological position of many possible truths instead of one global meta-narrative (see for example Fortier, 1997: 118; Jameson, 1991: 62).

Of course, there is the question of how truthful participants can be when they find themselves under scrutiny of their peers and a facilitator. AT practitioners are also very aware of the gap between portrayed attitudes and real-life actions. For example, participants might argue passionately (and sincerely) for the importance of condom use but will find themselves unable to actually adhere to their own convictions. However, this

is not a phenomenon exclusive to an AT workshop. Everybody knows the difference between good intentions and their practical achievements[18] as well as the influence our social environment has on our actions. In this sense again then AT actually portrays a more life-like picture of the research subjects and their context.

The previous chapter has shown that all interview respondents (much to their surprise) felt free to communicate during the workshop and thought the same of their fellow research subjects. When comparing the answers given in the workshop and the questionnaire though, it is interesting to note that questionnaire respondents quite frequently spoke about themselves and related their (sometimes very) personal experiences. The workshop participants mostly spoke in general terms, rarely relating personal experiences of which none was of a very intimate nature.

On the one hand, this has to do with the nature of the format the questions took. In the questionnaire they were clearly directed at the person answering, whereas in the workshop an image or scene was watched and then the characters portrayed were discussed. On the other hand, it is clear that many people will choose not to divulge too much personal information to a group they do not know very well. Therefore, if the nature of the research demands very sensitive questions, there either has to be more time given in the workshop to building the trust needed or a questionnaire or similar anonymous tool needs to be employed.

I believe that in most cases of qualitative research, the triangulation of methods will therefore yield the most detailed results. As shown in Chapter Four, some issues were not raised by the workshop group that were mentioned in the questionnaire and the other way round. Denzin & Lincoln describe this phenomenon, saying that ‖each practice makes the world visible in a different way" (2008:5) and that often it is useful to see the world in as many different ways as possible.

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[18] The fact that expanded knowledge and even changed attitudes do not equal behaviour change is a challenge that many AT practitioners are facing. In the South African context this concerns especially the many interventions geared at HIV/AIDS education and prevention (see for example Dalrymple, 2006; Durden, 2003).

If for research purposes it is necessary for example that the data collected covers the greatest possible range of all potential answers in the shortest possible space of time, it is best to use varied methods of data collection. If however, as in my case study, the research effort is only conceived of as a starting point for a longer process of action and reflection to follow, it is not necessarily required to triangulate to gather useful data.

For S.A.R.A.H.'s purposes for example both the questionnaire and the workshop on their own yielded enough data to design subsequent interventions. In comparison though, the answers from the workshop were generally more in-depth and already thought through further by the participants. It therefore would have been probably easier for S.A.R.A.H. to use the data gathered in the workshop to create events that are engaging for the students.

One of the strengths of AT as used in a process like this is its interactive nature which allows for flexibility. As in a focus group, this means that the facilitator can not only ask further questions to clarify a point that was made but he or she can also adjust the workshop to the needs of the group. This includes for example gauging the appropriate difficulty of the exercises and questions, changing their order or adjusting the length of time given to each.

Even more than in a focus group though, the process is guided not only by the facilitator, but also by the research participants. This means that ideas are raised that go beyond what is given by the researchers which can lead to new insights and questions. One S.A.R.A.H. member for example described her experience with AT as a research method saying that ―not only do you get more information about the things you were specifically looking for, but you discover other things you wouldn't have thought about beforehand" (S1).

<u>Analysis of data collected</u>

Naturally, this fluidity of the content matter makes it difficult to quantify the answers at times. Counting the responses is also inhibited by the realities of group dynamics. For example, in addition to the instances when people change their mind or contradict themselves (as mentioned above), there are other times when a participant will not express his or her opinion because it has already been said by somebody else.

Of course, for S.A.R.A.H.'s purposes it was not that important to know for example whether 12 or 14 out of 16 participants thought cheating was problematic in a relationship. Instead it was obvious from the process that the majority of the group was giving it a lot of thought, speaking about and portraying numerous instances of unfaithfulness. Similarly, other topics arose that were clearly important to the participants. The workshop was planned to end with a mindmap that would help the group list their issues according to significance for future events, effectively collating part of the research findings themselves.

Even though this did not happen, it was possible for the researcher to gather the importance assigned to each issue by the group. I was able to do that not only through what the participants said but also through their non-verbal communication. That includes of course the actions portrayed in the exercises but even more so the (often unconscious) gestures of consent or dissent and the visible signs of interest shown (or not) when a certain topic was raised.

Of course, just as the participants communicate non-verbally, so does the facilitator. Although this is also the case in a personal interview or focus group, it seems that, because AT usually asks participants to _step out of their comfort zone', the researcher here needs to be even more aware of this and especially of how his or her subject position influences the communication. I will expand on this shortly.

As said above, all of these instances of communication constitute data in an AT investigation. This variety of information makes the recording and transcription of what happened during the research process more difficult than when working with a questionnaire for example. Not only are the questions asked not fixed anymore, but the way they are answered is multi-layered and sometimes ambiguous. As far as I know, there is not one framework of analysis that most AT researchers use, but instead they usually create their own parameters to capture the data that is important in their opinion (Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Peseta, 2007). In my opinion, this is a situation that is due more to the newness of AT as a data gathering tool rather than to an inherent impossibility to create a general framework that could be applicable in different situations.

As becomes obvious, there is a lot of flexibility with AT as a research method, concerning its design, throughout the data gathering process as well as during the evaluation of the data gathered. On the one hand, this flexibility is an advantage of AT, because it can be easily adapted to different research situations. On the other hand this freedom and flexibility is a challenge for the researcher because his or her own subject position obviously influences the research process.

Subject position of the facilitator/researcher

During the interviews one S.A.R.A.H. member for example mentioned that a number of scenes shown in the workshop had portrayed gender based violence (S2). In fact, this was only ever shown (and talked about) once in the workshop – in the scene he had been involved in. However, this was obviously one of his expected outcomes of the workshop and he remembered the issue to be given the space he thought it deserved.

Nevertheless, I would argue that a researcher using AT and being conscious of his or her subject position can use this to an advantage, since ―one way of conceptualising difference, is to recognise it, not as a justification for ‗othering‘ but rather as affirmation

of the politics of experience" (Young-Jahangeer, 2009:50). Knowing my subject position in relation to the workshop participants I could for example use our similarities (we were all students) to create a feeling of community. At the same time, I was aware of our differences, obviously skin colour and age and less noticeably life experience – for example, I had never stayed in a residence. This helped me to not get involved in discussions and to look at comments made with the non-judgmental view of an outsider.

Of course, if the facilitator is too different from the research participants, it can become a problem. Not speaking the same language can be an obvious hindrance in the correct interpretation of what is being said (although it can also be an advantage at times, see for example Bharucha, 2003:4 and Young-Jahangeer, 2009:52), but similarly a researcher could misread participants' images and even body language. Because it is an on-going, interactive process however, the participants themselves will usually rectify any misconception they feel the facilitator has. Nobody likes to be misunderstood.

Furthermore, being aware of one's subject position vis-à-vis the research subjects, is important for any researcher, whether using a focus group interview, a survey or any other kind of research tool. We now understand that research can never be completely objective and that ―the concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:22). I would therefore argue that qualitative researchers in general, and those of us working with arts-based research in particular, are generally more aware of their subject position, acknowledge it and are therefore in fact less likely to let it unduly influence the research process (also see Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:301; Gray, 2003:87).

When interviewing the commissioner of the research, the three S.A.R.A.H. members present at the workshop, I was struck by an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, all of them liked the AT format of the workshop a lot and said that they thought it helped the participants to feel safe and say what they truly thought about an issue. On the other hand, they said that they felt the group dynamic might have influenced what people said. While of course both statements can be true at the same time, the second one seemed to portray a level of doubt on the part of the S.A.R.A.H. members. They apparently felt that

the data collected seemed ‗too good to be true', not in the sense that it portrayed only ‗good' behaviour, but rather in the sense of it being too ideal for their purposes. They consequently mistrusted it.

Trust and power

In academia in general there also does seem to be mistrust towards any data that is not written down, as if the written word or number is somehow more truthful than an image or voice recording. This essentially has to do with the positivist assumption that there is one truth that can be captured and the scepticism towards interpretative research paradigms (as discussed in Chapter Two). This scepticism towards the methodology – and the methods – makes transcribing the data collected with the help of AT even more important. It would have been interesting for example to compare the S.A.R.A.H. members' memories of the workshop with the written report and their reaction to it.

A research process using AT though does not only need trust in non-written data but also in the participants themselves. The flexible form described above gives a considerable amount of control over the process to the research subjects. This can be a daunting prospect for some researchers since it effectively means that their power in the research setting has been curtailed. This development is of course very welcome to those working for example in *Action Research* who believe that the researcher's role should move ―from the role of being the expert in research to that of a process facilitator" (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007:56).

An AT workshop like the one used in the case study is therefore only as successful as the extent to which the participants decide to support the process. It is possible for example that a group of research subjects decides to ‗boycott' the workshop, not joining in the exercises or not engaging with the topics the facilitator suggests. But even these actions would then be data, albeit different than expected, that could be analysed for further usage.

In my experience, every group, no matter their age or social position, will eventually join and enjoy the interactive AT exercises. Some groups however take longer than others to ‗warm up' to the idea, some need more guidance and others would like to be completely free to express their creativity. Facilitating a workshop like this is therefore a constant challenge to balance the amount of necessary control with the amount of freedom given to the participants. This task cannot be achieved if one mistrusts either the process, the research subjects or even one's own use of power (as discussed in Chapter Three, to create a safe environment, it is often important that the facilitator retains control of the situation).

This shift in the power relations, although it was not spoken about, was evidently perceived by the participants of my AT workshop. They took ownership of the process and felt responsibility towards its success. This became clear when, without being asked, they not only listed possible new topics, but also gave specific suggestions as to how S.A.R.A.H. could proceed to engage as many students as possible.

When interviewed, all of the workshop participants asked when there would be another workshop and were clearly keen to join again. I was even called by the house committee member who participated to remind me to return, a request that I directed to S.A.R.A.H. but which unfortunately was never fulfilled. Aside from S.A.R.A.H.'s initial plan, it was clearly also the engaging format of the workshop that raised the hopes for more.

Research as a tool for change – conscientisation and community

AT usually raises at least as many questions as answers and engenders an inquisitive atmosphere. This was evidenced by the interviewed participants who all said they thought about the workshop afterwards and even shared their ideas with others, as compared to the questionnaire respondents interviewed of whom only a third said they did think about

the topic afterwards. One S.A.R.A.H. member participating described this fact in the following way:

> Mostly I felt that people didn't actually want to talk about these issues, but when they got there they did. And then I felt that they actually wanted to talk a lot more and deeply about serious issues (S3).

The taking of ownership on the part of the research participants and their thoughts afterwards point to a huge advantage AT seems to have over other, more conventional forms of research and that is the fact that the research subjects are benefiting not only from the product of the investigation (in this case the data gathered to produce new events in residences), but from the research process itself.

All of the workshop participants stated in the interviews that they felt the workshop had _opened their mind'. This expression was used repeatedly and seemed to indicate more than that they had gained new knowledge through the process (although that was mentioned too). Tellingly, it had made them enjoy and (in some cases it seemed) rediscover their curiosity, at least about the topic at hand, relationships.

It also _opened their mind' to their fellow students' opinions and ideas, a fact that was stressed by almost all of the interviewees. One of them even related how the process had taught him to empathise with others:

> It was strange but it was fine, actually it was very good because it's good to be able to see things from a different perspective, because you know you learn a lot. You know, sometimes we just take things from people and think this is the right way without taking time to think things through and understanding what other people go through (WP1).

This sharing of opinions was possible, of course, because most participants felt free to voice their own ideas, even if they contradicted what was said before. This point was very important to all of the interviewees who repeated it over and over again. It was obviously an affirmative experience for them.

Being able to listen to one another, to speak one's mind courageously as well as to communicate more effectively were identified by the participants as skills gained through the process. Others, as observed by the facilitator, were performance and directing skills, developed during the preparation of the scenes when participants asked themselves whether their audience would understand what they wanted to say with their actions.

In addition, what was stressed over and over in the interviews both by the workshop participants and by the S.A.R.A.H. members was the fact that all of this learning was achieved in an atmosphere of enjoyment. In fact, many attributed the success of the process (on a personal level as well as concerning the research outcomes) to the ‚fun' it generated. The reasons given were the fact that it was not boring but engaging and that it ‚relaxed' everybody so they felt free to talk. Another participant also related how the physical process helped her remember afterwards what was said and done throughout the workshop.

What happened in this short space of time then was essentially a *conscientising* experience for the participants, although the aim of the workshop had simply been to collect data. *Conscientisation* is a term first used by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and ‒essentially describes a state of raised political awareness" (Young-Jahangeer, 2009:39). I would argue that ‚political' here ‒means the system of relationships – social, economic, cultural, spiritual, psychological – that define a particular moment in history" (Taccone quoted in Winters, 2003).

The level of conscientisation becomes evident through statements by participants who mentioned numerous times that they felt they had ‚learnt' something and even more importantly, related how they thought about applying that learning to their lives. One student for example compared the roles she portrayed in the workshop to ‒the different roles one person has to play in one day" and observed that they are connected to the different types of relationship one engages in (WP3). Another participant said that ‒the main thing I got from it was that sometimes there are abusive relationships […] but then

it's very important to retain your individuality and to be truthful to who you are" (WP2). One student in particular stresses how this workshop had shifted his attitudes:

> Like when we grow up there are some institutions that shape you and the way you think, the way you view people, like men should do this and not that and should refrain from doing that, so in the activities I got to experience different roles and learned a lot. […] You know, sometimes we just take things from people and think this is the right way without taking time to think things through and understanding what other people go through. Like we talked about issues that we're faced with in our communities and our lives, so for example, we heard from different people, some people said it's like this and others said, no, it's like that. (WP1)

In this quote, like in many others, the participants expressed the view that they felt they had learned most by listening to ―other people express themselves" (WP4). Since it was an interactive process and the participants felt ―we had to share our ideas" (WP3), the teaching and learning went both ways. It was clear therefore that part of the enjoyment of the process was the feeling that everybody contributed and that one's own contribution was valuable, which ties in with what was said above about taking ownership.

I was surprised by how much a short workshop, that even seemed not very focused to some participants, had affected those taking part in it. Although in planning and facilitating it, I had focused on how to gather the biggest amount of data, it seemed that AT's tendency to conscientise (at least when used in an interactive way) was impossible to suppress.

This might be explained with the help of the term *praxis* which was defined by Freire as ―reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" which he deemed to be the goal of *problem-posing education* (1970: 33). AT, as I used it, being problem-posing and derived from Freire's and Boal's ideas, seems to always engender both parts of praxis, even if one wants to focus simply on the reflection. This seems logical when one assumes that ―a critical consciousness [allows] people to question the nature of their historical and social situation – to *read* their world – with the goal of acting as subjects in the creation of a democratic society" (Conrad, 2004:5).

However, it was not only on the individual level where this workshop was reported to have influenced the participants, but even more so on a communal one. On the one hand this concerned the sharing of ideas as described in the following quote:

> You know, when we came out of this workshop we went back to our rooms and discussed it with our friends and so we kinda continued the workshop on our own […] so it helped many people, not just the people who participated. (WP5)

On the other hand the workshop clearly had a socially cohesive effect. One student for example reported that ―it was really fun because I got to interact with some of the people from res I never even talked to or shared a laugh with" (WP3). Another student said he had felt ―unity" in the workshop despite the differences of opinion (WP1). Some participants mentioned that they continued to talk to more people even one month after the workshop and that they wished for it to be repeated. One of them described the situation in the following way:

> People I did not know before, I did not speak to before, I now know who they are. We still talk now, but about different things. I wish there could be more stuff like this to get us talking so we become like a community, a family. (WP1)

Bethany Nelson, in her study about ―the relationship between community and power for urban students of color" (2009:60) made similar observations. To explain the agency and responsibility that she saw displayed by students in drama class she used the psychological construction of *Sense of Community* (SOC). SOC can be defined as ―a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Nelson then went on to show how SOC ―is a source of power for the students […] and power stimulates action" (2009:68). She explained how the SOC aspects of ―freedom to be their ‚true selves' and ‚speak their minds' [are] factors in their sense of power in the class" (71). Interestingly, this feeling of agency then engendered not only action, but also a stronger sense of SOC, showing how the notions of community and power can reinforce each other.

I find that these reflections mirror the experiences of the participants as related by them and my (and S1's) observations of their interaction in the workshop. This points then to the greatest advantage AT as a research method seems to have over non-interactive research methods (and, I would argue, also over a focus group interview for example) which is its community building potential.

This outcome will not come as a surprise to many AT practitioners who recognised its potential in this field long ago and are often using it for exactly this purpose. Barbara Santos for example explains that

> Theatre of the Oppressed – and more specifically Forum Theatre – aside from promoting the discovery of the self, aside from reinforcing an individual's self-esteem and self-confidence, also contributes to the establishment of the collective "we" […] that comes from becoming a citizen who understands the world as a collective in which events are interdependent, both cause and consequence of social, political, economic and religious occurrences. (2002:232)

What did surprise me though was how effective the workshop was in creating SOC given such a short space of time and the fact that most of the participants did not know each other very well. In fact, even though I was of course aware that community building is usually one of the outcomes of an AT process, I did not plan the workshop with this goal in mind.

It seems then that the biggest difference of AT as a research method as compared to a questionnaire lies not in the outcomes for the researcher, but in those for ‚the researched'. Although the questionnaire used in this case study encouraged some of the respondents to rethink their ideas on the topic and even engendered some discussion, it remained mostly a solitary activity. Even more importantly, it did not create new connections between people who did not know each other very well. In the AT workshop on the other hand the participants not only gained (mostly communicative and analytical) skills but most of all a strengthened feeling of community.

Depending on one's intentions as a researcher or research commissioner, this makes AT either a very attractive or a very daunting method of inquiry. If one sets out to get clear cut answers from research subjects without any interest to stimulate deeper thinking or questioning on their part it would not be advisable to use AT. The answers will invariably be ‚messier' than with other methods.

Naturally, there is also always the ‚danger' that once participants start to question their social and political influences, they might start challenging the research process with its embedded power structures too. Some researchers might be scared to lose their power not only of organisation (who gets to collect data and how is this done?), but more so of interpretation. Who gets to say what the collected data means?

Of course, this ‚shift of power' is exactly what many researchers working within paradigms such as *Action Research (AR)* or *Participatory Inquiry,* hope to achieve. They realise that researchers themselves are often guilty of perpetuating unequal power structures (Wilkins, 2000:197) and are working towards a research practice that is a ‒collaborative form of inquiry, in which all involved engage together in democratic dialogue as co-researchers and as co-subjects" (Heron & Reason, 1997:292; also see discussion in Chapter One).

For researchers hoping to involve the research participants and to benefit them through the process, AT seems like the ideal method of inquiry. Not only is it engaging and encourages the research subjects to participate, but it also creates agency out of analysing the given situation, strengthening self-confidence and creating a Sense of Community. This means also that one of the benefits of AT for **the researcher** is that responsibility for the process and the outcome is shared.

An interactive AT event would be a very useful starting point to an AR project, which aims after all to create a cycle of reflection, planning and action to resolve social problems (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:4). The workshop in the residence for example generated an atmosphere in which analysis was used to confront practical problems the

participants might have (see interviews with WP2 & WP5). As a researcher, I see a huge advantage in AT, because it creates a platform in which data can be gathered and analysed and action planned and sometimes even executed all at the same time.

What was probably most surprising for me is that it did not take long for the benefits described above to be felt by the participants. It is therefore also possible to use AT when a researcher does not have much time to spend with a community, but still wants his or her research subjects to benefit from the process. As my case study shows, even though there was no follow-up to the workshop the participants still reported to have gained from it. This means that instead of the research process only benefitting the researcher, as is the case with most investigations (I am not speaking about the research product, like a new HIV drug, but the **process**), ‚the researched' also have an advantage by participating.

Of course, judging from other case studies of AT as a research method (Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Nelson, 2009; Peseta, 2007) and AT experiences in general, if the process of investigation lasts longer and aims to actually create sustainable social change through concerted action, the benefits of AT described above, will be felt even stronger by the participants. In any case, what seems impossible is to use AT as a research method **without** affecting some kind of change in the research subjects and researchers working with it need to be aware of this fact.

Conclusions - The value of Applied Theatre as a research method

I will now attempt to answer the underlying question of this study and to draw some conclusions about the value of Applied Theatre as a research method. I will specifically investigate whether AT is a useful method of qualitative inquiry when working with participants not familiar with drama and theatre exercises and under time constraints.

From the last chapter it becomes clear that it would not be sensible to use AT in a research set-up that requires quick and definite answers. It is often not possible to quantify the data collected with the help of AT as it is usually open ended, contradictory and raises more questions than it answers.

It is equally not very practical to use AT when large numbers have to be surveyed in a short space of time. If, for example, the University of KwaZulu-Natal wanted to find out how many of its total number of students are sexually active, it should rather use a survey. Even if it wanted to have short and precise answers as to why the students chose to be sexually active or not it would be very complicated to canvass a huge number of students with the help of AT.

If, however, the University wanted to investigate the social dynamics and power relations underlying sexual activity on Campus, AT would be very useful. As shown in the previous chapter, AT can be used even when speaking about a sensitive topic and provides a much deeper analysis of social processes than most other research methods. This form of research of course works with smaller groups (in my estimate a maximum of 30 participants), but the interaction within these groups can then point to issues that affect the community at large, in the example given it would be those that touch the whole student body.

Of course, an investigation like this requires a facilitator who is sensitive towards the research participants and aware of his or her subject position. This is equally important

during the analysis, since the data collected is extremely varied, reaching from written words to actions to feelings, often hard (or impossible) to record and often ambiguous. If the researcher is not aware of his or her expectations and experiences, they can determine the conclusions drawn.

However, if the researcher is aware of this responsibility, the research process using AT can be beneficial for both sides. In fact, the awareness that he or she is just one of the individuals in a collective process, can take pressure off the researcher who does not carry the sole responsibility anymore. The fact that in an AT workshop data collection and analysis happens simultaneously can give the researcher the freedom to simply accept statements as made without having to interpret them. The researcher becomes a facilitator, who facilitates the analysis of the given actions and statements by the participants themselves.

A researcher using this method then gains useful data that is truthful in more than one sense. Participants give their ‚true' opinions, but they also reproduce ‚true life' as they see it, while, in fact being their ‚true selves' in a real life situation. This situation includes the group the individuals act in and the pressures it exerts on its members as well as the support it provides. This, I would argue, is a research setting that is much more ‚true to life' than any other I have encountered, and it stands to reason that the data produced in this setting reflects ‚real life' more than the one collected through other methods.

Everybody taking part gets a chance to evaluate their own position as the analysis of data happens naturally during the workshop by participants commenting on actions and statements made. As a group and individually, the participants investigate the issues at stake and their personal attitudes relating to them. Of course, some respondents of other research methods also gain this benefit, in this case study for example a third of the control group members interviewed remarked that the questionnaire had made them rethink their attitudes about relationships. In the workshop though, this was true for every single one of the participants interviewed.

This points to the biggest advantage AT has over more conventional research methods. While it can certainly hold its own when it comes to what I call ‗product outcomes', that is the data collected, its ‗process outcomes', the benefits participants gain just by taking part in the research, are surprising even in a short space of time. Apart from the opportunity to evaluate their own attitudes mentioned above, they are also being given a space to be heard and to listen. This was something all interviewed participants stressed because it strengthened their confidence as well as their empathy.

This means that a research process employing AT already in its first stages of data collection engenders agency and a Sense of Community (SOC, as argued in Chapter Five). As many of the participants mentioned in the interviews, the workshop engendered closer relationships between those taking part and even within the wider community. One participant expressed his experience like this: ―I wish there could be more stuff like this to get us talking so we become like a community, a family" (WP1).

Speaking about Entertainment-Education Suruchi Sood argues that it is ―an increase in self-efficacy, an increase in collective-efficacy, and greater interpersonal communication among audience members" that bring about ―social change at both the individual and collective level" (2002:153). Since, as shown above, social change is often at the heart of the desired outcomes of qualitative research nowadays (sometimes obviously so as in Action Research, sometimes less apparent), AT as a research method constitutes already the first part of the solution that wants to be found. It is therefore a tool to simultaneously collect data, analyse it, plan action and create the individual and collective agency to act, all of this while having a lot of fun – now which researcher would want to say no to that?

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Appendix 1: S.A.R.A.H. Workshop Structure

1. 17.00 – 17.30:   Welcome & Warm-Up

    - Intro → S.A.R.A.H., myself, explain two purposes
    - Consent → forms, camera, interviews → contacts
    - Exercise 1: Laughing Round
    - Name games
    - Warm-up exercises
    - Trust exercises in pairs
    - Scenes in Pairs

2. 17.30 – 18.00   Friendship

    - Image-Theatre exercises in pairs
    - Images in pairs: What does real friendship look like? What should real friends say and do?
    - Discussion of the images
    - How does ‚female' friendship look like, how ‚male'?
    - Is it possible for a man and a woman ‚just to be friends'?

3. 18.00 – 18.30   Romantic Relationships

    - Number game (4 groups of 3 -5)
    - Short scenes: A bad situation in a relationship → one or both partners say or do something they should not
    - Forum Theatre: Realistic? What's happening? Intentions? Solutions?
    - Discussion: Problems specific to Residence life?

4. 18.30 – 18.50   Residence Life

    - In big group: Modelling a Residence experience, what has been seen, heard...
    - Mindmap: Other topics to discuss about life and res? What kind of activities should S.A.R.A.H. organise?

5. 18.50 – 19.00   Goodbye & Feedback

Appendix 2: S.A.R.A.H. (Students against Rape and Hate) Questionnaire

1. What do you like to do to relax in your **free time**?

2. How would you describe a **good friendship**? (e.g. what do real friends do for each other or say to each other?)

3. How would you describe a **bad friendship**? (e.g. what do bad friends do or say to each other?)

4. Is it possible for a straight man and a woman **just to be friends**? Why/ Why not?

5. How would you describe a **good romantic relationship**? (e.g. what do the partners do for each other or say to each other?)

6. How would you describe a **bad romantic relationship**? (e.g. what do the partners do or say to each other?)

7. Did you ever experience problems with a **friendship/relationship in res**? If yes, what happened?

8. Do you have any other things you'd like to **discuss** to do with life or conditions in your residence?

9. Do you think a student society like **S.A.R.A.H.** should be active in res? If so, what should they do?

Appendix 3:   Structure for Interviews with Questionnaire Respondents

- Why did you choose to answer the questionnaire?

- Was the questionnaire as you expected? Why/ Why not?

- How did you feel when filling out the questionnaire? Why?

- Would you say your answers in the questionnaire accurately portray your thoughts and feelings on the subject in question? Why/ Why not?

- As a researcher, would you use a questionnaire like this? Why/ Why not?

- Are you ‚taking home' something from this questionnaire? If yes, what? If no, why not?

- What do you think the researchers got from your questionnaire?

- Anything else?

<u>Appendix 4: Structure for Interviews with Workshop Participants</u>

- Why did you choose to participate in the workshop?

- Was the workshop as you expected? Why/ Why not?

- How did you feel when participating in the workshop? Why?

- Do you think the Applied Theatre exercises used in the workshop helped the process of investigation or rather hindered it?

- What did you feel were the strengths of the Applied Theatre methods used?

- What its weaknesses?

- Did you have any drama/theatre experience?

- Would you say your responses in the workshop accurately portray your thoughts and feelings on the subject in question? Why/ Why not?

- As a researcher, would you use a workshop like this? Why/ Why not?

- Are you ‗taking home' something from this workshop? If yes, what? If no, why not?

- What do you think the organisers of the workshop ‗took home'?

Appendix 5:   Structure for Interview with S.A.R.A.H. Members

- Did this workshop answer the questions you had?

- Did this workshop help you in defining your next activities in the residence?

- Is the outcome as you expected? If not, what is different? And why do you think this is so?

- Do you think the Applied Theatre exercises used in the workshop helped the process of investigation or rather hindered it?

- What did you feel were the strengths of the Applied Theatre methods used?

- What its weaknesses?

- Would you say the responses you got in the workshop accurately portrayed the participants' thoughts and feelings on the subject in question? Why/ Why not?

- As a researcher, would you use a workshop like this again? Why/ Why not?

- How did you feel when participating in the workshop? Why?

- What do you think the participants of the workshop ‚took home'?

- Did you have any drama/theatre experience?