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ABSTRACT

Dramatic principles and techniques have been used extensively in counselling and psychology in an attempt to understand and assist individuals with their emotional and psychological difficulties. A central element in drama is the forming of a character. The actual experience of the actor in character has been little explored in what it might have to offer to the realm of psychology and the understanding of human experience. This study aims to address this question through an investigation of the experiences of professional actors who have been personally affected by roles they have played. Using a qualitative research design, ten professional actors were interviewed and asked to describe in detail their experiences of being personally affected by dramatic roles. From these interviews significant statements have been extracted and interwoven into a narrative analysis. The concept of a dialectic was found to be effective in increasing understanding of the relationship between actor and character. Within this dialectical framework, five central themes were found to capture the nature of the acting experiences as described by the actors interviewed. The findings were also found to have implications for the areas of theatre and psychological theory, and for existing drama-based therapies.
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INTRODUCTION

The notion that theatre and real life are closely connected is not a new one. For thousands of years actors have played crucial roles in society. In traditional societies, actors have generally held special status as "guardians of wisdom" with abilities to communicate directly with the "spirit world" (Bates, 1988). In modern, North American society, while actors have ceased to provide a way of connecting with tangible spiritual forces, they still represent characters or beings which bring us in touch with the great forces of life, such as birth, death, love, and conflict. As audience members we can be affected, moved, and even changed by powerful performances which speak to our own personal lives and experiences. The role of the actor, however, can go beyond "actor as traditional healer", or actor as "professional performer" when it is linked with daily human life and experience. Sociologists, in particular, have focused on creating an analogy between theatre and life, postulating that needs, goals, and desires to present ourselves favourably will lead us to create roles appropriate to specific social contexts and settings. Like actors, then, behaviour and interactions are governed by constructed roles, and we share a similar awareness of our relationship to the external world and how we are presenting ourselves within it. Simply put:

...We are all actors. Every day we play a number of roles with varying degrees of skill and commitment...We know that in different settings, different company, at different times, we behave as different people. The'performance requirements' of everyday life vary from one stage to the next. (Bates, 1988, p. 7,90)

While a sociological stance focuses on role construction and the analogy between theatre and society, psychological approaches have sought to understand and assist people with their emotional and psychological difficulties through dramatic means. The actual role and experience of the actor in character, however, has been little explored and largely remains untapped in what it might have to offer to the realm of psychology and to the understanding of human experience.

In examining the personal experience of the actor playing a dramatic role, deeper understanding of this experience might offer rich insights into the potential power of "role taking" and reveal how such experiences might affect an individual's personal life. During my own years of working in professional theatre, I observed that it was not uncommon, in fact, for the playing of a character to affect and impact actors at a personal level. The most widely used power for actors is the power of transformation (Olsen,
1989) and the potential exists for the transformation into dramatic characters to create personal insight, change, and perhaps even transformation within the actor. As psychologist Brian Bates (1988) reports, after working with and interviewing numerous actors:

...acting, moving, speaking 'inside' a created persona is a liberating, startling, and sometimes deeply revealing experience both to oneself and to others. Transformation into a 'character' may result in significant changes outside and inside, whether on stage, film, or in daily life. (p. 98, 100)

Given that some actors are personally influenced by some roles they have played, one might wonder: "why and how are actors personally affected?"; "what is involved and must be present in such an experience to facilitate this result?"; "and what does the nature of the acting experience have to offer to our understanding of human nature and processes of personal change?" In answering such questions, exploring the experiences of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played might potentially yield rich insights into understanding what is involved in this experience. As well, such insights might have a great deal to offer when applied within therapeutic settings. The power of dramatic experiences and techniques have already, to some extent, been successfully discovered and utilized within psychological therapies. The experiences of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played may have implications for such therapies as Psychodrama, Drama Therapy, and Fixed-Role Therapy, which seek to promote change through dramatic means. Though drama-based therapies have been used extensively in various forms and have been acknowledged as being powerful, they are often limited concerning solid theoretical foundations and have been the focus of little research (Adams-Webber, 1979; Corsini, 1984; Landy, 1984; Pervin, 1980). As well, drama-based therapies have been utilized in varied and inconsistent ways and it is unclear as to what elements, exactly, are involved in facilitating change. It seems beneficial, therefore, to look at the dramatic "source", namely theatre itself, and to explore what elements may be involved in potentially affecting personal change. Such research is needed as "little knowledge of what is theatre has yet entered the use of the theatrical perspective in the social sciences" (Mangham & Overington, cited in Mast, 1986).

Therefore, the question or problem this study will address is: What is the experience of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played. Such an investigation is intended to reveal deeper understanding of the process of personal change itself, how the playing of a character can facilitate
inner insight and change, and how existing drama-based therapies can be further enriched and developed by such an exploration of actors' experiences.

To address this question, ten professional actors were interviewed individually and asked to describe the experience of taking on roles and how they were personally affected. The resulting material from the interviews formed the "data" from which themes and findings emerged.

Structure of Thesis:

1. Literature Review

Given this research question and its implications, several bodies of knowledge related to the phenomena being studied will require explication. The first involves a review of several major theories within theatre which offer approaches to effectively creating a character. Second, previously published testimonies of well-known actors describing their acting experiences will also be included to sensitize both researcher and reader to possible themes and insights which might emerge in the study. Finally, three psychological therapies, which use dramatic principles and techniques, and their theoretical bases will be reviewed.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this study and its rationale will be reviewed including the selection of participants, conducting of interviews, and analysis of the interviews.

3. Narrative analysis

The analysis of the ten interviews will take a narrative form, meaning that themes will be described with verbatim extractions and quotes from the actors' testimonies interwoven throughout. The narrative analysis will be divided into 5 sections: Context, Structure, Dynamics of the Structure, Outcome of the Process, and Culmination or Movement of the Whole. At the end of each of these sections, the relevance of that section will be related to the three drama-based therapies earlier reviewed.

4. Discussion

A final discussion chapter will review the main findings, limitations of the study, implications for theory, practice and future research, and final summary of the study.
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theatre theories

Four broad approaches to acting will be reviewed, including the ways in which these theories view and define successful and effective character development and performance. These four approaches have been chosen due to their significant historical impact on the theatre profession and because they represent four strongly contrasting theoretical orientations which highlight the diverse ways in which character formation can be understood.

Stanislavski

Stanislavski contributed enormously to the area of acting theory and is still considered one of the truly great figures in modern theatre history. He created a detailed and complex acting system based on his never ending search for truth in acting. He sought to eradicate all that was artificial, mechanical, and superficial from the stage (Cole & Chinoy, 1970).

Stanislavski set out to discover how actors could find and have control over their own creative inspiration. He observed that there are inner forces which are not under conscious control, such as being able to command oneself at will to experience emotions of fear, joy, compassion, or grief. However, actors seem able to experience such emotions truthfully on stage if inspired. Stanislavski hypothesized that inspiration lies in a subconscious realm not always easily accessible or directly controllable. This led him to seeking ways of reaching the subconscious, the heart of inspiration, through conscious means (Moore, 1965). Through correct and conscious preparation of the role, the opportunity is created for creativity and inspiration to naturally arise from the subconscious and create the truth of the character. All the elements of Stanislavski's system focus around making the actor's actions logical and truthful, and serve the purpose of "turning on" the subconscious of the actor (Moore, 1965).

For Stanislavski the importance of tapping into the subconscious and facilitating inspiration was to create characters of the utmost truthfulness. This is achieved by the actor seeking to understand and experience the inner life of a character; the soul of a role. The actor first understands the given circumstances offered by the play, the director, and the actor's own conception of the role. These circumstances give a general outline from which to start. However, it is the discovering of the inner life of the character that is the actor's most important task. To live the role means to believe in the
possibilities of such a life. An actor understands the part, puts himself or herself in the character's place in order to act as the character would. This arouses feelings in the actor that are necessary to truthfully play the part:

(An Actor's) job is not to present merely the external life of his character. He must fit his own human qualities to the life of this other person, and pour into it all of his own soul...That is why we begin thinking about the inner side of a role, and how to create its spiritual life through the help of the internal process of living the part. You must live it by actually experiencing feelings that are analogous to it. (Stanislavski, 1936, p. 14)

Stanislavski, however, made it clear that the feelings which arise in actors are feelings which belong to the actors themselves. The objective is not for actors to lose themselves on stage. There is always an element of observation within the actor when playing a character. "An actor lives, cries, and laughs on stage but he never stops watching his tears and his laughter" (Moore, 1965, p. 83).

Thus, actors must find truthfulness in a role by finding complementary emotions within themselves. The result is a fusion of the elements of the character and of the actor. The character cannot exist without the material and soul of the actor's own inner life, and neither should it "take over" leading the actor to lose a sense of self on stage. At the same time, the actor cannot resort to only playing himself or herself on stage without seeking the truth of the character through choosing and analyzing the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions. For Stanislavski this crucial and delicate union is found through the use of various concepts, specifically the use of "emotional memory", believing in the "as if" or "what if", drawing on the observations of daily life, and finding logic and coherence in the actions of the character. Each of these will be briefly described.

In tapping into the subconscious realm, the actor reaches into his or her emotional memory. According to Stanislavski (1936), to reproduce feelings one must be able to identify them out of one's own experience: "Just as your visual memory can reconstruct an inner image of some forgotten thing, place, or person, your emotional memory can bring back feelings you have already experienced" (p. 158). Through the conscious work of preparing, analyzing, and understanding the role, the opportunity is created for material in the emotional memory of the actor to emerge, providing the truth of the character and the merging between the character and actor. Once an actor has begun this process of being
receptive to emotional memories, he or she becomes more capable of drawing on such memories, more responsive and effective in tapping into this subconscious repository of feelings and experiences.

Stanislavski believed in two sources of material for creating a character: the inner life of an actor and his or her observations of the outside world (Moore, 1965). An actor must continually build a vast reserve of impressions, observations, and penetrations into human nature. An actor must learn to observe people and their behaviour, and try to understand their thoughts and actions:

We must not overlook the question of quantity of reserves...You must constantly be adding to your store...You draw principally upon your own impressions, feelings, and experiences. You also acquire material from life around you, real and imaginary, from reminiscences, books, art, science, knowledge of all kinds, from journeys, museums, and above all communication with human beings. (Stanislavski, 1936, p. 180)

For actors to draw on their own reserves, to use their inner lives and select from their storehouse of observations and perceptions of life, they need to be able to believe in the credibility and reality of the character they are playing. This is assisted by creating an "as if" or "what if" perspective. Through asking "what if", actors can create "problems" for themselves and efforts to solve these problems lead to clear and logical actions, a "through-line" of action is provided. "If" stimulates the imagination, allowing actors to enter into a world that "could" be. "If" lifts actors out of their present reality and into the realm of possibility. As Stanislavski (cited in Cole & Chinoy, 1970) described:

The actor says to himself: "All these properties, make-ups, costumes, the scenery, the publicness of the performance, are lies. I know they are lies, I know I do not need any of them. But if they were true, then I would do this and this, then I would behave in this manner and this way towards this and this event." (pp. 494-5)

The "if" triggers the imagination and leads to inspiration regarding the emotional life of the character.

The conscious task of creating the "if" is designed to tap the subconscious of the actor and create the truth of the character.

More than any other well-known theorist of acting, Stanislavski emphasized a psychological approach to creating a character. The potential for actors to be personally affected by this approach is substantial, as actors must thoroughly analyze and understand the world of the character, seek emotional believability through tapping into the storehouses of their own emotional memories and life experiences, and constantly seek logic, coherence, and truthfulness in the actions and intentions of the characters.

Stanislavski's system demands that actors fuse with the characters without losing their own identities,
while ensuring that the character is truly "born" as a fully developed and believable human being. Actors tap into their own known experiences, while entering into an often unfamiliar "as if" world that may open up possibilities of which they had never been previously aware:

...the character must express the actor's individual ideas, his emotions, his intuitions - analogous, of course, to those of the character. Only when the actor's personality fuses with that of the character will he live the role. Facing a new personality in every new play, an actor has the possibility of endless discovery. (Moore, 1965, p. 76)

By learning to tap into the subconscious realm, according to Stanislavski, it is possible for actors to become more effective and responsive in accessing their own inner feelings and experiences, thus possibly heightening insight and inner discovery. As well, if effectively playing a character is equated with truth, logic, and honesty, the actor is required to truly enter the world of the character which, as Moore suggests, creates the possibility of discovery and new experiences for the actor.

Bertolt Brecht

While similarities between the approaches of Constantin Stanislavski and Bertolt Brecht can be found, the differences are more striking and will be dealt with here.

While Stanislavski sought emotional truth and reality, and felt that empathy toward the characters on the part of actor and audience was beneficial, Brecht felt theatre must be "cleared of magic"; there must be no attempt to suspend belief, put the audience in a "trance", or give them the illusion that they are witnessing natural, unrehearsed events (Brecht, cited in Cole & Chinoy, 1970). Brecht developed an approach to theatre which is characterized by observation, objectivity, stylization, and distance, whereby actors present the characters much as they would if they were conveying knowledge or setting forth an argument. Both actors and audiences are demanded upon to think for themselves, make decisions, and take stances. Brecht's theatre is deeply social in nature in that the action onstage is to present social behaviour and the significant choices modern man must make. The aim is to show how the world works so that the world may be changed (Brecht, cited in Cole & Chinoy, 1970). By encouraging distance or "alienation" rather than identification or empathy, the actors and audience are forced to recognize the social realities and alternatives the characters represent; they are forced to think for themselves and are freed up to come to their own conclusions.
The Brechtian approach to effective acting, then, involves an avoidance of strong identification with the character. Since actors do not identify themselves with the characters they can see them from a particular, chosen standpoint, can reveal their opinion of the character, and bring the audience to observe the character critically. The actors must avoid fusing with the role so completely that the character seems natural and both actor and audience find it impossible to conceive of it any other way:

In order to produce A-effects (alienation effects) the actor has to discard whatever means he has learnt of getting the audience to identify itself with the characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into a trance, he must not go into a trance himself. Even if he plays a man possessed he must not seem to be possessed himself, for how is the spectator to discover what possessed him if he does? This does not mean that if he is playing passionate parts he must himself remain cold. It is only that his feelings must not at the bottom be those of the character, so that the audience may not be those of the character either. (Brecht in Willet, 1964, pp. 193-4)

By presenting the character in this "alienated" way, and disallowing both actors and audience to overly identify with the characters, the presentation of the characters becomes only one of many possible alternatives; other possibilities can thus be inferred and contemplated. While Stanislavski advocated an "as if" approach encouraging actors and audience to suspend disbelief and enter into the world of the characters, Brecht puts his approach in terms of "not this but that", meaning that, as clearly only one position is being presented, there are many other possibilities to be considered (Brecht, 1970). Of the utmost importance is the actor's own experience of objectivity and the challenge of presenting the complexity and contradictions of a character while maintaining a healthy distance. To help the audience experience the characters as captivating and engaging while still remaining critical and free to extract their individual conclusions and opinions, the actors themselves must approach the development of the character in a similar "objective" and evaluative fashion:

In confronting his role, an actor's attitude should be that of someone who is astonished and resistant. He must carefully weigh, and grasp in all their specialness, not only the occurrence of the events of the story, but also the behavior of the person who he is to represent. He cannot take any of the events as "given", as something that "couldn't be otherwise", that "was to be expected from the nature of the character." (Brecht in Cole & Chinoy, 1970, p.309)

While Stanislavski aimed for emotional authenticity, Brecht too sought authenticity in a different way. Authenticity to Brecht meant revealing, while in performance, that an actor is not pretending to be the character but is, in fact, an actor consciously indicating what the character is (Mast, 1986). In "indicating" the character, Brecht placed an enormous emphasis on action, physicalization, detail and
particulars. He did not want to remove or reject emotional aspects of the characters but feeling had to become gesture; an action had to reveal what was going on inside; everything to do with emotions had to be externalized (Jones, 1986). Specific character behaviours are combined together with incredible attention to moving, grouping, and positioning characters on stage. If Stanislavski's rehearsal cliche' was "I don't believe it", then Brecht's was "what's the position?". Relationships, pictures of the human condition were displayed through physical, visual images, similar to continuous snapshots.

In his image of theatre as a forum for learning, Brecht held that actors need to possess a certain level of social consciousness. Actors observe the world and human nature; they formulate opinions and objectives and gain knowledge, as without these nothing can be represented. Actors must master the knowledge of human social life for the period in which they themselves live and, if necessary, for the period in which the characters live, as "there is no such thing as a character ungoverned by social context" (Jones, 1986, p. 116). According to Brecht, actors must also have an investment in social change and a passionate concern for human progress (Weigel in Cole & Chinoy, 1970).

Brecht's approach clearly offers the actor a very distinctive way of experiencing the character. While emotional involvement is not excluded, Brecht offers a more distanced, objective method of acting and developing characters. Actors may be personally affected by the experience of examining and analyzing the life and context of the character while maintaining sufficient distance to "learn" and remain critical. Actors are able to formulate their own opinions and come to their own conclusions without becoming too emotionally caught up in the inner world of the character. Actors may come into contact with characters which represent views of the world, or ways of understanding it, which are unfamiliar, and provide personal learning experiences for the actor. Actors may also gain insight into the human condition through the single perspective the character represents and through the alternatives which that one perspective implies. Ultimately, Brecht's approach speaks to that aspect of the actor which attends to detail, in which actors stand back and observe themselves in character, assessing the process and keeping themselves separate from the character. Brecht's ideas possibly represent a more objective, distanced, analytical, educational approach to taking on a character in which actors are encouraged to think for themselves, consider the existence of many possibilities as opposed to one single "truth", and perceive themselves as social agents with responsibilities to society.
Gertz Grotowski and Peter Brook

In combining Grotowski and Brook under one heading the intent is not to suggest that their theories and work are the same, but to highlight their similarities and focus another approach to acting that they both represent. Both sought to push theatre beyond "acceptable" and comfortable limits. Both pursued more abstract and philosophical ideals, envisioning theatre which destroys stereotypes and pretenses, and challenges forms of common and understood social behaviour and communication.

For Grotowski the experience of the actor is deeply profound and revelatory, with the actor seeking to confront "evasions, tricks, and cliches" (Grotowski, 1968), and strip away all barriers in order to tap inner resources and give himself or herself fully to the audience. Acting becomes, not a collection of skills, but an eradication of blocks that stand between the actor and his or her "creative confession". Grotowski emphasizes the pushing past of one's limitations, exceeding one's blocks and barriers, challenging of given, conditioned ways of behaving, and revealing the inner most parts of oneself: "The total act of the actor is laying oneself bare, tearing off the mask of daily life, exteriorizing oneself...It is a serious act of revelation. The actor must be ready to be absolutely sincere" (Grotowski, 1968, p. 533).

The theatre is a place of provocation where actors sacrifice the inner most parts of themselves and undertake an act of "self penetration". The actors, in breaking down barriers and revealing themselves, offer an invitation to the audience to do the same. Acting, then, becomes an experience, an opportunity for revelation and transformation, rather than merely a "performance":

The theatre is a vehicle, a means for self study, self exploration; a possibility of salvation. The actor has himself as his field of work. The actor is step by step extending his knowledge of himself through the painful, everchanging circumstances of rehearsal and the tremendous punctuation points of performance. In Grotowski's terminology, the actor allows the role to "penetrate" him; at first he is all obstacle to it, but by constant work he acquires technical mastery over his physical and psychic means by which he can allow the barriers to drop...The actor does not hesitate to show himself exactly as he is, for he realizes that the secret of the role demands his opening himself up, disclosing his own secrets. (Brook, 1968, p. 59)

A crucial part of Grotowski's acting process involves the discarding of stereotypes and the challenging of everyday norms and "given" forms of behaviour. In stripping off the everyday "mask", the inner and more truthful self is revealed; the individual roles and "lies" which are manufactured in daily life are revealed. In challenging conventional feelings and customs, standards of judgements, and daily pretenses, a state of defenselessness is created and in that state transcendence and self discovery are
possible. The challenge for the actor, then, is to give himself or herself in the extreme, and to refrain from holding back before obstacles set by custom and behaviour. In doing this the safety of the day-to-day "mask" is dropped to reveal a truer inner self:

He (the actor) must learn to use his role as if it were a surgeon's scalpel to dissect himself. It is not a question of portraying himself under certain given circumstances, or of "living" a part (as with Stanislavski); nor does it entail the distant sort of acting common to epic theatre and based on cold calculation (as with Brecht). The most important thing is to use the role as a trampolin, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask - the inner most core of our personality - in order to sacrifice it, expose it. (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 45-6)

The purpose is not to strip away the "everyday mask" and leave the actor or spectator exposed and defenseless, but to reveal the conflict between the daily mask and the inner self and, in this process, to put back the everyday mask, in full consciousness, knowing now what purpose it serves and what it conceals beneath it (Grotowski, 1968).

Brook similarly sought to challenge the status quo, finding that "every moment of naturalism, even the most obvious and unquestionable, benefited from being knocked off balance" (Jones, 1986). As well, the division between the inner "self" and outer "mask" deserved similar testing through:

...trying to smash the apparently water-tight divisions between the private and public man: the outer man whose behaviour is bound by the photographic rules of everyday life, who must sit to sit, stand to stand - and the inner man whose anarchy and poetry is usually expressed only in his words. (Brook, 1968, p. 52)

Themes of risk and exploration permeate the work of Grotowski and Brook. In order to transcend the "half measures of daily life" (Grotowski, 1968), and discover a truly creative process, risks must be taken and the possibility of failure accepted. In pushing beyond safe limits and challenging personal blocks, Grotowski hypothesized that these obstacles are self imposed and that discomfort, not inability, must be overcome to discover true creativity, as "creativity is never comfortable" (Grotowski, 1968). To Brook, as well, the actor must be prepared to discard what he or she has created in forming a character; though longing to cling to what has been found and developed, the creative actor must accept that a role is never fixed or finished, and though this involves the fear of appearing in front of an audience exposed and uncertain, this is the only way a part is "born" rather than "built", the only way a revelatory "experience" takes place rather than a solidified and constructed "performance" (Brook, 1968).
While the ideals of "self penetration", stripping of "daily masks", and exploration of the "unknown" are central, abstract concepts to Brook and Grotowski, both emphasized the importance of balancing abstraction with form or structure. To Grotowski, in order for the actor to tap unknown possibilities he or she must be open to, and not attempt to conduct or control, the creative process. The mind, which imposes familiar solutions, must give way to associations, bodily impulses, and spontaneous actions. However, an actor cannot express himself or herself through anarchy; discipline and spontaneity must co-exist (Grotowski, 1968). The actor has a text which, as in music, serves as a score. The score offers signs which provide the foundation for the actor to then create the encounter that must take place between actor and audience. Grotowski and Brook offer approaches to acting which represent extreme involvement, risk, and even sacrifice on the part of the actor. Revelation and transformation are not only possible but expected, and the goal is for actors to push their own limitations and blocks, venture into the "unknown", risk failure, and challenge conventional forms of behaviour and communication. Actors through this process are not necessarily deeply identifying emotionally with the world of the character, as with Stanislavski, nor are they standing back and critically examining the world the character represents, as with Brecht. Instead, they are centering very much on an "experience" that will tap into their own personal inner resources and continually challenge their own comfortable boundaries and those of the audience. As Grotowski states, actors must overcome discomfort not inability. The demands of such an acting approach could possibly lead to personal revelation and even transformation through the vulnerability and defenselessness which can be created; this in turn creates the possibility for new discovery and transcendence, and can lead to accessing the realms of the inner self as opposed to holding fast to the contracted, "safe", outer "mask". Following such methods as Grotowski and Brook propose potentially holds strong possibilities for the actor being personally affected in some form, as actors are required to give so much of themselves in the acting process, must sacrifice comfort and safety, and must seek to explore realms of expression and forms of communication which are new to them. As Brook (1968) states: "...theatre is a vehicle, a means of self study, self exploration; a possibility of salvation" (p.59).
Improvisational approaches to theatre differ somewhat from the other approaches covered thus far, as improvisation tends to focus on exercises and games rather than the development of scripted characters in a written play. However, improvisation is often involved in the process of character development and the dynamic nature of theatre itself makes a certain element of improvisation inherently and constantly present.

The range of variables affecting any one dramatic performance is so enormous...that clearly no one performance can be perfectly replicated...If the performance is anyway alive or fresh - if the actors, rather than merely reciting their lines, actually respond to one another - then purposeful innovation will be common. (Mast, 1986, p. 171)

Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone, both pioneers in the area of improvisational theatre, sought to reverse the inhibitions and cautiousness of adulthood by re-capturing the spontaneity and imagination found in childhood through games and exercises. For Spolin, the task was to increase an individual's ability to experience the world around him or her. In increasing a person's capacity for experiencing, inner potential is released. Direct, immediate contact with the environment leads to personal freedom, self awareness, and self expression (Spolin, 1963). Total "experiencing" means involvement at all levels: intellectual, physical and intuitive. Of the three, the intuitive is most neglected and is the most vital to learning. The intuitive level responds to immediacy. Developing opportunities for immediate and spontaneous involvement, therefore, taps the intuitive level and creates opportunities for growth and expression: "Through spontaneity we are reformed into ourselves. It creates an explosion that for the moment frees us from handed-down frames of reference, memory choked with old facts and information, and undigested theories and techniques of other people's findings" (Spolin, 1963, p. 4). Johnstone also places large emphasis on spontaneity and imagination. Spontaneity involves letting go of controlling future outcomes, and simply "seeing what happens" (Johnstone, 1979, p. 32). Once actors engage in spontaneous acting they experience a very different way of being; they come to "know" what to do whereas normally they "choose" what to do.

The "game" is the form providing the involvement and personal freedom necessary for "experiencing". A game or exercise has a problem that needs solving within it and an objective or point of concentration upon which the players must focus. This approach creates an atmosphere of absorption
and concentration on the objective at hand, removing the need for analyzing or intellectualizing; the
tendency to discuss characters and scenes critically and psychologically is discouraged (Spolin, 1963).
Unless needed to solve a specific problem, past remembered experiences are avoided as the group works
for immediate ones. Process is emphasized over content. Johnstone acknowledges that personal,
sometimes disturbing, material can emerge in improvisational exercises but that such material does not
become the central focus or something to be resolved, instead material is accepted as "normal" and the
process and central problem of the improvisation remains the focus of exploration: "Rather than isolate
the individual's 'problem', theatre games give the group of players a problem to solve" (Schattner &

A major obstacle to spontaneity, self expression, and true experiencing of one's environment is fear
of disapproval and judgement. For Spolin, the human tendency to look to others for approval and
acceptance often leads to a loss of personal experiencing: "Self-discovery and other exploratory traits
tend to become atrophied...the investigation and solving of problems becomes of secondary importance"
(Spolin, 1963, p. 7). Through a total focusing on the objective or problem in the game, self-
consciousness is lessened, and the working atmosphere is relaxed and made enjoyable through an
understanding that there is no absolutely right or wrong way to solve a problem. Any language and
attitudes of authoritarianism must be removed to encourage intuitive, spontaneous, and immediate
experiencing.

Both Spolin and Johnstone emphasize the importance of group cohesiveness and interdependence.
All players must work together to solve a given "problem" The improvisational process begins to break
down as soon as individual members begin controlling the outcome or "blocking" the offerings of fellow
players. "There seems to be no doubt that a group can make or break its members, and that it's more
powerful than the individuals in it. A great group can propel its members forward so they can achieve
amazing things" (Johnstone, 1979, p. 29).

Improvisation, then, facilitates direct contact with the environment, powerful interconnectedness with
fellow players, a release of personal freedom, and the coming together of the total person, physically,
intellectually, and intuitively. Spolin points out that such experiencing can lead to change, new
understanding, and even immediate transformation, which can transcend the theatre world and remain with the actor in everyday life:

The artist must always know where he is, perceive and open himself to receive the phenomenal world if he is to create reality on stage...it is imperative to sharpen one's whole sensory equipment, shake loose and free one's self of all preconceptions, interpretations, and assumptions so as to be able to make direct and fresh contact with the created environment and the objects and the people within it. When this is learned inside the theatre world, it simultaneously produces recognition, direct and fresh contact with the world as well. This, then, broadens the student-actor's ability to involve himself with his own phenomenal world and more personality to experience it. This experiencing is the only actual homework and, once begun, like ripples on water is endless and penetrating in its variations. (Spolin, 1963, p. 14)

While effects of improvisation can spread to an individual's everyday world, the experience of the improvisation itself serves as a departure from everyday existence as well. The opportunity to spontaneously create roles and situations offers a "vacation" from one's everyday self and the routine of everyday functioning (Bond in Spolin, 1963). In this freedom, strain and conflict can be lifted and potentialities released: "In theatre games we are momentarily relieved of the burden of our lives; hurtled into the present, we have the opportunity to become masters of our own fate, even if only for fifteen minutes" (Landy, 1986, p. 218).

For the actor creating a role, improvisation often becomes a means of discovering the character. Through improvisation the actor is able to test and explore the range and depth of the character, is free to make mistakes without consequence, and finally forms character from the exploration of many possible choices. Through improvisation the character can begin to take on a life of it's own and the actor's own personality can meld with the character as he or she experiences the character spontaneously and immediately. Moving beyond the intellectual and physical, the intuitive level is activated allowing for a deeper experience of the actor-as-character.

For the actor, improvisation may have a personal effect in various ways. With the right atmosphere of acceptance, the actor can experiment and explore freely without fear of judgement or negative repercussion. With the emphasis on spontaneous and immediate experiencing, an actor can be freed from old frames of reference and standard, predictable "ways of being". In releasing old assumptions, preconceptions, and interpretations, the actor is free to make new and direct contact with the world and with the character being developed. Such contact, as Spolin has suggested, can create an increased
capacity for experiencing, whereby inner potential is released and one's ability to experience and involve oneself with the world is increased. It is also possible, as both Spolin and Johnstone have suggested, that the return to the natural responses of childhood rather than the taught inhibitions and caution prevalent in adulthood, may in itself encourage a new and insightful exploration of the inner self. It is interesting to note how strongly Spolin and Johnstone see improvisation as offering opportunities for personal growth and benefits beyond the dramatic stage. In de-emphasizing psychological analysis they call instead for immediate and spontaneous experiencing in which individuals are "masters of their own fate" and able to leave the confines and restrictions of their lives behind. This potentially offers actors enormous freedom of expression and the opportunity to experiment in ways that were previously unavailable to them.

As was mentioned, these four approaches have been reviewed in order to highlight the variety of thought and opinion present in theatre theory. Each contain principles for effective character development and each hold the possibility of impacting the professional and personal world of the actor.
Actors' Testimonies

While theories of theatre and acting help in representing diverse understandings of what playing a character possibly involves and how it might impact the actor, the most important source of information concerning the experience of actors is the actors themselves. As psychologist Brian Bates (1988) suggests: "Theories have their uses and can help in training actors, but in considering the experience of the actor there seems no point in separating the acting from the actor" (p. 38). Therefore, it is relevant to review existing published accounts and testimonies written by actors themselves. For clarity and organization, these published accounts have been reviewed and statements have been extracted and organized into predominant themes. These themes and their supporting statements will be discussed. These themes may also indicate assumptions which may be made regarding the possible outcomes of this study.

Fear, Risk, and Uncertainty

A theme permeating actors' published testimonies in various forms is that of fear. Inherent in the performing of characters are anxiety, self consciousness, and fear of failure in front of others. In playing Hamlet, actor Steven Berkhoff (1989) writes:

There is something dreadfully disquieting about waiting to say your first speech. You hear everyone speaking over you like voices disembodied in a dream. You can hardly pay too much attention to what else is going on but you try, if only to direct energy from yourself, for it is liable to attack and inflame your fears. (p. 8)

Anthony Sher (1985), in playing Richard III had dreams about his performance in which "...the moment comes to start. Everyone looks toward me. I know the play begins 'Now is the winter...', but I cannot say it. Everyone is waiting, staring" (p. 27). Allowing the presence of critical observers and the possibility of failure to take over a performance can in itself lead to defeat. Actor, Simon Callow (1984), attests that "self consciousness is death to a performance..." (p. 231). However, these fears for some actors seem to hold the possibility of both threat and inspiration; Steven Berkhoff (1989) recounts: "You see your friends in the front...Oh God, I wish I hadn't seen them but increase concentration and overcome...The intensity increases your performance power since you have revved up to overcome their presence..." (p. 25). What Berkhoff seems to suggest is that what instills fear and even dread may also act as a spur or catalyst in increasing concentration and power.
The theme of fear expands to exist, not only in the area of performance, but also in the process of character development itself in which the actor needs to be willing to withstand and even embrace uncertainty, risk, anxiety, and the "unknown" in order to discover the truth and depth of the character. To Simon Callow (1984), an actor is faced with the questions: "Can you find the character within you? And having found him, can you believe in yourself in him?" (p. 173). Anthony Sher (1985) faced these questions when he began the task of playing Shakespeare's Richard III, not knowing if he would be able to find the character within himself: "My Richard is in its infancy; barely that, it is struggling to take form, uncertain whether to take form" (p. 37). The inherent elements of risk and the uncertainty of success, however, appear to hold both the seeds of destruction and inspiration. In fact, it appears that for many actors accepting some uncertainty is essential to discovering the character. Again with Richard III, Sher found such trust necessary, writing that there are "moments in rehearsal when the whole character suddenly comes into focus. But building a character also involves leaving some ends untied..." (p. 179). Berkhoff (1989) describes the possible rewards in staying with discomfort: "It is not a comfortable experience to be with him (Hamlet). On the other hand it can be exhilarating if you like heights" (p. 11). Later, and more generally, Berkhoff concludes that in taking on Shakespeare's characters "...there is a task to perform that will make us or break us. In the end it reveals us" (p. 44). In such varied statements it appears that attempts to impose control and certainty in the development of a character, while attractive in their safety and security, may not lead to the exploration and inspiration necessary to successfully portray a character; "Acting demands the suspension of will. Everything that is willful in a performance comes between the actor and the performance..." (Callow, 1984, p.204). Risks and uncertainty not only need to be tolerated but welcomed as being at the heart of the creative process. The rewards when this takes place can be powerful: "In those times we are inspired and can do no wrong. Nothing can shake us and disaster is welcomed as challenge...The sluice gates are open and the adrenalin is flowing freely. It's almost like a state of grace" (Berkhoff, 1989, p. 112). It is evident, then, that for some actors the experience of developing and performing characters involves fears which hold the potential for both failure and success, and that avoidance of inherent uncertainties and risks may in fact lead to defeat. These qualities instead need to be understood as part of the process which leads to the rewards of discovery and inspiration.
In commenting on the experience of playing a character and how that relates to their own inner selves and identities, some actors speak of the character's power and even overwhelming presence in their lives. At one extreme actors experience a kind of possession; the actor, Kinski (in Bates, 1988), "found his possession by the character to be so overwhelming that he rejects the term 'acting' as inadequate. For Kinski it is more a matter of being" (p. 70). At times the presence of the character and its power can be disconcerting: "The more successful you are at submerging yourself in someone else, the more schizophrenic it can make you feel...it can have a very strong and strange effect on you" (Ullmann in Bates, p.74). The process of rehearsal and the quest to find and develop the character facilitates and encourages the strong presence of the character in an actor's life. In playing Richard III, Anthony Sher (1985) remembers the early, searching stages of character development: "I'm totally obsessed by it, like being in love - this one person dominating your every thought. All day, everyday, since it was first mentioned, I've been on the prowl for bits of Richard" (p. 82). Later in his accounts Sher writes: "What is happening is that I am surrendering to Shakespeare's Richard" (p. 196). Simon Callow (1984) adds to this theme: "...rehearsal is the most intense experience of the character you have. He invades your life" (p. 167). Similar to Sher's experience Callow also describes a kind of surrender: "...you will feel almost irrelevant: a receptacle, a conduit, because the character will start to follow his own instincts and live his own life..." (p. 166). There appears to be varying extremes regarding this "taking over" of the actor by the character. For some, as described, this involves a kind of possession experience, for others the normal process of character discovery in rehearsal necessitates the character being the total focus and preoccupation. For others still, the character taking on a life of its own is reassuring and important in providing a sense of safety and strength in performance. For this third group of actors it is desirable to be a little "possessed" so that the character will be consistently and securely present in performance:

Suddenly there is something about the figure in the mirror that you no longer recognize. It has acquired an independence from you. It has its own way of speaking and moving which you can no longer control quite the same way ...and you no longer need to. You feel safe. The character has acquired a back bone, strong but supple, and whatever variations get introduced subsequently, something basic has come right, which you can count on to go on giving you support (Haymen, cited in Mast, 1986, p. 77).
Imitation and Observation

In developing the character, actors seem to rely on accessing material from both within themselves and from the outside world. In being "on the prowl for bits of Richard" (Sher, 1985, p. 82), Sher relied heavily on observation of human nature around him to provide material which was absent from his own inner repertoire. In playing a crippled and deformed Richard III, Sher found himself sensitized to certain people around him: "Strange how, ever since Richard III was suggested, I keep crossing paths with the disabled. Did I just not notice before or are there vibes at work?" (p. 46). In accumulating the observations needed to build a character it appears that the actor adds to his or her own repertoire on an ongoing basis: "You contain within you a memory bank, comprising thousands and thousands of memories of what it feels like to be...whatever. You never stop observing and trying out for size the behaviour of your fellow human beings" (Callow, 1984, p. 174). The process of observation and "trying out for size" also holds the potential for insight and discovery beyond simply locating the material for a character. In playing Richard III, Sher (1985) observes: "I had set out to look for a physical shape, but maybe what I found is something about being disabled (p. 117).

While the word "imitation" often conjures up connotations of superficiality and unoriginality, imitation of others through observation, and imitation of other actors who have successfully portrayed a character, often assists an actor in successfully finding the character for themselves. Direct and exact imitation of fellow actors is not the intent but rather simply the seeking of more material to add to the process of character development. Simon Callow (1984) confesses:

I have no hesitation in asking the writer and the director which actor, out of the whole range of acting known to us... would be ideally suited to this part. This question is useful in elucidating both style and character...I'll just try him on for size and find out what that frees in me, and what it inhibits, and the degree to which that defines the parameters of the part. (p. 172)

Later Callow similarly adds: "...of course acting is an art of imitation, of taking on the qualities of another, to find where they match yours, to what extent it would be possible for you to look like/ talk like/ feel like that man" (p. 172). Imitation and observation appear to play a major part in character development. Actors rely on the lives and behaviours of those around them and they become attuned to those aspects of the surrounding world which will fill in the gaps of knowledge, understanding, and sensations they need in order to build a truthful and developed character. As actress Meryl Streep (in
Bates, 1988) confirms: "The soul, the source of what I do is observation" (p. 124). Observation of other actors who have successfully created and portrayed certain characters helps add further material to an actor's storehouse of information. It seems logical to make use of what others have to offer, to benefit from observations of those who do a particular thing well; "I think you can learn more from watching great actors than ever can be taught in drama school and I think - since acting is based on observation - that there can be no better way of learning than to watch the greats" (Berkhoff, 1989, p. 72).

The Actor

While actors refer to the character taking on a life all its own, some also identify the importance of "the self" in developing a character; the personality and inner life of the actor cannot be removed from the situation but are fundamental to creating characters of honesty and depth.

Actors identify the need to relate somehow with the character and to be able to find something in common within themselves that can be used to give the character life. In an interview with psychologist Brian Bates (1988), actress Sheila Gish explains: "I wouldn't play a part I didn't feel I could understand. I always have to find something of myself in a character" (p. 103). Simon Callow (1984) describes a process of characterization that goes beyond simply understanding the character: "What it needs is for you to locate him in you. Only then will the energy spring from within, instead of being externally applied..." (p. 166). Anthony Sher (1985) concurs with this need for "inner location" of the character in his description of the evolution of the character Richard III: "Richard is coming up from within now, not painted on top" (p. 198). An actor quoted in a sociological study by Susan Mast (1986) summarizes this need for personal identification with the character:

You see, the character is not distinct from the person who plays it; the character, as written, is only two dimensional, the third dimension varies according to the person who plays it, and what the person gives to it is going to depend on what they have in them - so there must be something in common between themselves and the character. (p. 82)

Actors also identify a kind of vulnerability and exposure of themselves involved in this presence of "the self" in character development. It is not only necessary to find something in common with the character but actors must reveal aspects of their innermost selves; "Acting is much more a matter of exposing oneself than of adopting a mask...An actor is worthless if he cannot reveal himself on the stage" (Howard in Mast, 1986, p. 181). While playing Hamlet, Steven Berkhoff (1989) approached this
famous character knowing that the words he spoke as the character would have been heard by others
many times before. It became not the words but what he could bring to the part from within that would
breathe life into such a timeless character: "Of course there are a thousand ways to do this speech, but in
the end you have to show the audience who you are" (p. 101).

There is a quality of revelation and discovery in many of the actors' written testimonies, a sense that,
at some point in their struggles to develop characters, they came to realize that they had to use their own
inner lives. Simon Callow (1984) describes a personal account of just such a discovery:

The problem was that I thought the suit of armour, the mask, Simon Callow, were my centre. I had
sung songs, impersonated animals, donned garments, adopted accents; but it was always something
that I imposed on top of what I was... (p. 38)

Later he describes how his 'theory' of acting was upset:

...the actor's job was to go on making extraordinary shapes using a more and more varied palette:
The actor as juggler, as magician, but also as a weaver of spells and raiser of spirits; the actor as
imitator, stealer of faces. What I had ignored, or avoided, was the actor as himself, member of the
human race, fellow-sufferer, man in the street...I hadn't seen, or wanted to see, that an inner journey
would produce another range of colours and resonances. I was playing only the right hand of the
keyboard. Now I found the courage to open up the closely guarded secret places of myself. I had,
as it were, found the left hand. (p. 64)

In playing Hamlet, Berkhoff (1989) experienced a similar discovery: "I was seduced into trying to make
memorable something that requires the greatest simplicity in the world to do, and that is to be - yourself"
(p. 103). For some actors opening up the "closely guarded" inner aspects of themselves and experiencing
an inner journey in forming a character are the means to ultimately creating a character of depth and
honesty, a character that is a living thing with its roots deep within the actor. For those actors who
experience such a discovery there seems to be no turning back; the character must be rooted within the
actor or it is "nothing" (Callow, 1984, p. 81).

**Actor and Character**

Two contrasting aspects which have been discussed thus far involve the "taking over" of the actor by
the character, and the presence and necessity of the actor's self or personality emerging and revealing
itself through the character. Actors, not suprisingly, also identify a merging of or balancing between
these two experiences, a combination of character and actor blending together. When such a merging
takes place the effect can be exhilarating: "It is as if you are at one with your own being and the role, and
the forces of instinct and reason marry up and go on the same path. At such times you can do no wrong..." (Berkhoff, 1989, p. 37). Other actors describe a similar merging using different forms. Sheila Gish (in Bates, 1988) explains that "...you do keep bits. You give parts of yourself and you acquire some of theirs" (p. 103). Anthony Sher (in Bates, 1988) uses a visual image: "(Actors) sketch the characters and colour them in with themselves" (p. 119). Simon Callow (1984) puts forth a hypothesis theory: "Character is in a sense a hypothesis...If your hypothesis covers every aspect of the role, and brings up something more, then you'll give a great performance. The something more will be a vibration of your personality" (p. 165). Steven Berkhoff (1989) describes a merging experience in playing Hamlet where he as actor and Hamlet as character became indistinguishable: "I am Hamlet since when you play Hamlet he becomes you. When you play Hamlet, you play yourself and the instrument which is you" (p. vii).

These actors seem to be suggesting that the merging of actor and character is the mark of success and means to effectively developing a character for performance. There seems as well, for some actors, to be an element of personal discovery and meaning in being able to experience actor and character coming together as one. Lawrence Luckinbill (in Bates, 1988) describes this phenomenon:

I have inside myself an unchanging, undying need to be somebody else...That, however, is paradoxically coupled with the unchanging desire to express myself. So while I want to be somebody else, I also want to give voice to who I am... (p. 83)

Distance

Another observation taken from actors' published comments regarding the relationship between actor and character concerns the presence of distance. An actor experiencing distance from a character can, but not necessarily, be antithetical to the previously discussed merging of character and actor. Distance refers to the actor's conscious awareness of himself or herself as separate from the character being played and suggests that it is the actor who is in control of the process; "Your relationship to the play is that of the rider to a horse. It is the energy; you are the direction..." (Callow, 1984, p. 200). Actors, when commenting on this aspect of distance, appear to welcome a level of merging between character and actor but suggest that there is a limit as to how far this should go:

Actually the fun is to use your openness in such a way that the character can come through you. And if the character needs to cry, it's the character and not you feeling all over the place. It's a kind of openness that allows you to stand back and watch...The moment you feel too much private anger or private anguish you aren't in tune anymore (Liv Ullmann in Bates, 1988, p. 77).
The importance of distance to some actors goes beyond simply the effectiveness of performance to include the protection of the personal life of the actor as well. In playing the lives of more negative or disturbing characters...

You see things in the way those people would. But one's got to take sides. One's got to have one's own private censorship rejecting those perceptions. You are still inside yourself and you have the web of your own life to return to. (Mast, 1986, p. 156)

In advocating a level of healthy distance some actors seem to warn against allowing one's own personal emotions to take over, and the life of the character having too great an impact on the life of the actor. Once an actor has finished playing a character he or she must be able to return to and continue with his or her own life.

**Experimentation and Emotional Release**

In reviewing actors' published testimonies, actors comment on what the process of taking on a character affords them the opportunity to do and experience. Specifically, playing a character seems to provide the opportunity for the release of emotions and encourages liberating experimentation and playfulness. The playing of a character allows for the expression of emotions which might not be encouraged or accepted in daily life.

For Steven Berkhoff (1989), theatre itself provides a safe environment for the healthy expression of important emotions which are generally not released in society: "Isn't that why people go to the theatre? To see passions safely liberated which in life must be choked up and released only on golf courses?" (p. 185). To Berkhoff, emotions and passions exist which need to be expressed but which have been squelched by the dictates of daily living. The actor however, is allowed to unleash these inner forces: "You seem released in displays of passion that you never exhibit in your life: as if the very passions that have been suppressed by civilized behaviour are discharged to the same extent as they have been withheld..." (p. 37).

Actors also describe experiences of a more personal nature in which they discover emotions within themselves they had not previously expressed or allowed to emerge. Simon Callow (1984) recalls a profound experience of discovery:

The remarkable thing was not the emotion, but that I had allowed myself to show it...for as long as I could remember, I had never shown myself to be angry...And here I was, hurling people across the
stage, and roaring like a wild animal. It was obviously all there, inside me, and when I gave into it, my voice, my body, and my whole stance changed. I felt enormous power and freedom. I did, in fact, feel alive. (p. 36)

Marlon Brando (in Bates, 1988), describes a similar experience in which the release of emotion led to self discovery: "Acting has done as much as anything...to make me realize my anger and get rid of it. And when I finished the Wild Ones I think it was gone forever" (p. 4). Playing characters, then, can provide the opportunity to express emotions normally suppressed or discouraged in society, as well as to discover and release inner emotions which have long needed to find expression. Behaviours and the expression of certain emotions which might result in negative consequences in real life can be released in dramatic form without the same repercussions. Berkhoff (1989) gives an extreme but apt example: "I love killing people on stage since you can painlessly vent all your fury" (p. 201).

The opportunity for experimentation and playfulness are also inherent in the acting process. In rehearsal, particularly, actors are able to push beyond safe and familiar boundaries, follow spontaneous impulses, and test wide ranging ideas. For Simon Callow (1984), "...a rehearsal room is a kitchen, where you combine ingredients as they come to hand, testing, tasting. Finally, you apply flame, the thing grows" (p. 109). Later in his testimonies, Callow continues with this idea: "For a period, the rehearsal needs to be completely indulgent. You wade into the swamp and wallow, indulging, tasting, gorging on the character's sensations" (p. 167). An actor interviewed in Sharon Mast's (1986) sociological study similarly describes the experimental nature of rehearsal:

In lots of ways the rehearsal is more exciting than doing the show itself, because it's a period of discovery - discovering what the play is about, discovering what the characters in the play are about, discovering things that weren't apparent. Extending yourself a bit, trying things out. (p. 83)

Along the theme of experimentation is the element of playfulness and a returning to an open child-like state:

The very act of acting, is inherently child like...like all children's games, what we do is exploratory: trying out, trying on, investigating, imitating...Behind the surface seriousness is the sense of play, assuming roles and ploys; and behind that is the seriousness, the danger, of life...It's neither comfortable nor easy to get hold of your child-self again, but it's behind all great acting and all great theatre. (Callow, 1984, p. 179)

Actress Liv Ullmann (in Bates, 1988) sees theatre as a place where people return to a child-like view of the world: "I think acting is tremendously important because the theatre is one of the few places people can still go and suddenly unlearn something they have been taught. Unlearning, I think, is very
important" (p. 131). Within the confines of the dramatic world, then, lies the opportunity to experiment and "play" in ways seldom afforded in day to day living. Such opportunities offer discovery and even joy:

Suddenly for the first time I was acting...I was being in another way...I suddenly couldn't perform enough...It wasn't to be seen. It wasn't to impress. It was to do it, to revel in this newly discovered joy, to romp around in the adventure playground that I myself had become. (Callow, 1984, p. 37)

**Expansion and Discovery**

In the course of taking on a character actors describe profound experiences of discovering aspects of their inner selves which were previously unexplored. In playing a character, then, the actor is led to examine and sometimes expose aspects of their own nature that, in many cases, they did not know existed. As Callow (1984) describes, this can involve "shining light on places of yourself which you don't like to look at in your most private moments" (pp. 163-4). However, the effect of "shining light" can be transformational, as Ben Kingsley (in Bates, 1988) describes after he played the role of Hamlet: "It allowed me to explore myself so profoundly that I believe the experience changed and restructured my whole life" (p. 5). Liv Ullmann (in Bates, 1988) tells of days when "during a rehearsal or a performance, unknown secrets within myself come forward, sparked by the shaping of a role, a dialogue with a fictitious character" (p. 83). The process of developing a character may serve as a catalyst to inner exploration and self knowledge. Simon Callow (1984) vividly captures this idea:

The sense of expanding into areas of yourself which have been dormant or repressed is exhilarating, even a little frightening: 'Do I have this in me?' Parts of yourself that you've never dared to reveal, as an ordinary inhibited citizen, burst arrogantly forth. (p. 167)

Actors also note the discovery within themselves of "many selves", that what they have considered a singular personality can in fact contain multiple and varied dimensions. Actor Marlon Brando (in Bates, 1988) states: "We each contain within us the seeds of all the characters we will ever play" (p. 83) and actress Sybil Thorndike (in Bates, 1988) similarly remarks: "When you're an actor...you're a person with all these other persons inside you..." (p. 80). In developing characters, then, it is possible to discover diverse aspects of one's personality, aspects which in other settings may not have had the opportunity or circumstances to find expression. Psychologist, Brian Bates (1988), concludes from his many interviews with actors:
Most fundamentally the actor engenders a view of life in which the myth of a single, unified personality is exploded. We are each many 'selves' and actors recognize and give expression to the variety of inner personalities that we so often ignore or repress. (p. 202)

In addition to discovering previously unknown or seldom acknowledged aspects of one's inner self, the playing of characters appears to provide opportunities for expansion of the self into new and unfamiliar areas. Apart from a greater awareness of what exists within one's own personality is the element of introducing new experiences and possibilities which had not previously been within one's scope of understanding or realm of experiences. The fact that actors by the very nature of their profession play vast numbers of characters provides them with an unusually large range of experiences; "...an actor must go through the emotions in a night that some people only go through two or three times in their life - at weddings, funerals, and by the side of death beds" (Rip Torn in Bates, 1988, p. 64). As well, actors, through characters, come in contact with new aspects of life and human nature:

One thing I love about being an actor is that we're constantly being exposed to new things...we're constantly being thrown into situations when we have to play people who are into different things than we are. One is opening one's self, to some extent, to a different field. And I love that (Anthony Sher in Bates, 1988, p. 122).

Present in the acting process, then, is the opportunity to expand understanding and gain intimate knowledge of other lives, places, and experiences which might otherwise remain unexplored or not understood.

Simon Callow (1984) describes at length how the experience of playing a character is powerful in providing new and expansive experiences. For such experiences to take place one must first be willing to explore unfamiliar territory: "At one stroke the mask that I had screwed on my face fell away...I understood what playing a character was. It was giving in to another way of thinking" (p. 37). Callow goes on to describe this process involving upheaval and potential discomfort: "You're breaking down your own thought patterns and trying to reconstruct them into those of the character, pushing into emotional territory which may be strange and difficult for you..." (p. 135). While strange and difficult, the rewards of such a process offer the realization of new possibilities and inner potential. As an actor, Callow explains, "you demonstrate the almost limitless possibilities of personality freed from circumstances and environment...In order to survive the world we limit ourselves to certain patterns of thought and behaviour, forging an identity which excludes vast areas of potential" (p. 167). Central to Callow's
experiences is the idea that individuals, in playing characters, can open themselves to new possibilities and "ways of being" which have previously been bound by limited experiences and learned limitations. In playing characters one is exposed to new aspects of life while glimpsing possibilities and potential previously not known or comprehended within one's imagination; "Being this person you will be able to do things you cannot do. You will be able to lift weights that you cannot. You will be able to dance steps that you cannot...It's not you. But it could have been" (p. 185).

Cummulative Experiences

As a final theme, some actors reviewed refer to the importance of accumulated experience. While playing a specific character may in itself provide enormous insight, knowledge, or increased skills, the results of numerous experiences over time yield benefits as well. Playing a particular character early in one's acting career is quite different than playing the same character after years of experience. In playing a difficult role early in his career Simon Callow (1984) recalls: "I felt myself too small, my voice too weak, my means too limited - and I was right. Only experience and the gradual expansion of one's instrument - oneself - can enable one to play such scenes" (p. 89). In some instances an actor experiences enormous fulfillment in playing a part because the role calls upon the actor's accumulated knowledge and experience:

The combination of temperament, physical endowments, and personal readiness for the part is elusive. It comes from maybe four or five times in a career. It's generally an ending rather than a beginning, too, a sort of summary of what you can do up to that point. (Callow, 1984, p. 54)

With accumulated experience comes the increasing ability to "try on" new and different characters which in turn creates an ever increasing expansion of one's personality, adding new inner dimensions, insights, and experiences:

The more parts you play, and of course the more you live, the more your personality will vibrate. This is simply a matter of exercise. Few people who are not performers are allowed or willing to vibrate more than a tiny permitted corner of themselves (Callow, 1984, p. 165).

Evident in the actors' published testimonies are powerful experiences which possess some common and central themes. Most importantly, these testimonies offer vivid and living accounts of acting experiences and how those experiences potentially impact the actor. While theories have essential value,
it is true stories of personal experience which convey the potential, vitality and depth of the acting process.
Drama-Based Therapies

A third body of literature involves therapies which use principles and techniques from drama and theatre in order to reach therapeutic ends. In outlining three such therapies both the theoretical basis and therapeutic process of each will be reviewed.

Psychodrama

Psychodrama, probably the best known of the drama-based therapies, is an experiential approach which attempts to combine cognition, affect, and behaviour together through spontaneous and immediate interaction with others in a group setting (Corsini, 1984). According to Moreno (in Altman, 1983), the founder of Psychodrama, the concept of the self emerges from the roles one plays in life and roles exist only in relationship to other roles. A normal and healthy person develops a large repertoire of roles with which to interact with the social environment. The purpose of Psychodrama is to assist individuals in expanding their role repertoire, altering inadequate or dysfunctional roles, and enhancing role flexibility and adequacy. Through Psychodrama, a therapeutic situation is created in which reality can be simulated so individuals can learn new techniques of living without risking serious consequences or disaster (Moreno in Fox, 1987).

The foundation of Psychodrama is based on Moreno's unique understanding of human nature which primarily involves the concept of roles. With this emphasis, the focus is shifted away from looking at the psychology of the individual in isolation, to addressing an individual's interactions with others. Moreno (in Altman, 1983) "...deviated from traditional self-concept theories when he proposed the idea that the concept of the self emerges from the roles we play in life" (p. 88). Moreno (in Fox, 1987) defines roles as the actual forms which the self takes and thus roles are: "...the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moments he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved" (p.62). In short, individuals are defined by their interactions with others and the roles they play. Roles, in fact, do not emerge from the self but, instead, the self emerges from roles. Moreno (in Fox, 1987) postulated, as well, that individuals are defined not only by roles in relationships but by roles established by society: "...man is a role player...every individual is characterized by a certain range of roles which dominate his behaviour and every culture is characterized by a certain set of roles which it imposes with varying degrees of success upon its membership" (p.65). In understanding the nature of emotional and
psychological health, Moreno again sees roles as central: "Moreno's concept of mental health was based on the idea of the multi-role personality, the individual with a large repertoire of roles and the flexibility to act the right way at the right time" (Fox, 1987, p. xiii). To Moreno, then, flexible, adequate, and wide ranging roles are the hallmark of personal health and well-being. In developing an approach to fostering mental health Moreno (in Bonney & Scott, 1983) saw that "...role behaviour is the most obvious and fertile entree into the psychodynamics of the individual (p. 48). Thus the altering, improving, and expanding of roles forms the theoretical foundation upon which Psychodrama is based.

**Psychodramatic Theory**

Moreno sought to create a setting in which therapy involves re-creating scenarios very close to those experienced by people in real life. In many ways Psychodrama involves creative simulation where a client, or in this context protagonist, plays out actual life experiences, past and present, and critical events and relationships in order to create new opportunities for resolution and learning. Psychodrama, then, involves smaller and more condensed replications of life:

The psychodramatic method rests upon the hypothesis that, in order to provide patients, singly or in groups, with new opportunity for a psychodynamic and sociocultural reintegration 'therapeutic cultures in miniature' are required, in lieu or in extension of unsatisfactory natural habitats. (Moreno in Kipper, 1982, p.2)

The division between the world of therapy and real life, therefore, is lessened, as therapy takes the form of approximated real life situations or externalizations of inner mental processes. The client's world is not merely talked about but is brought into the room where it can be examined and possibly transformed (Stein & Callahan, 1982). Kipper (in Martens, 1988) describes Psychodrama's purpose, emphasizing the power of simulation:

Human beings have the ability to act and role play and in an effort to master the world around them they can produce behaviour volitionally. When their efforts fail, corrective measures can be created under simulated conditions in order to facilitate better coping. (p. 26)

In clients becoming deeply involved in acting out crucial scenes in their lives rather than simply talking about them, heightened realism and immediacy are created and clients are able to experience new awareness and relearning as well as possible alteration or expansion of roles. As well, while providing rehearsals for life, such an approach also encourages seeing and experiencing new ways of being in which the focus is not exclusively problem based but emphasizes development and change.
As was mentioned, Psychodrama involves the "here and now" recreation of events, experiences, and relationships, even if such incidences or issues took place in the past. This creates immediacy, reality, and deep involvement for the client. Spontaneity and creativity are crucial elements in the psychodramatic process. In Moreno's (in J. D. Moreno, 1989) own words: "Spontaneity and creativity are the propelling forces in human progress..." (p. 50). To Moreno, spontaneity is the essential life force without which, rigid, narrow, and limited behaviours and roles prevail. Through increasing spontaneity and creativity, the process of role reduction and inflexibility can be reversed and re-engagement fostered.

The creativity and spontaneity which facilitate role transformation and expansion take place within a group format and, in altering the traditional roles of audience, actor, director, and fellow players, everyone present is free to become engaged, involved, and affected. As has been reported from accounts of Moreno's own work: "There was no room for spectators in Moreno's theatre, and the actors were released from their scripts by playing themselves" (Martens, 1990, p.21). It is through facilitating encounters with an individual's real self and with others that change takes place, and the opportunity is given to alter and change limited or dysfunctional role relationships as well as rehearse and experiment with new alternatives. Fellow group players not only play roles in a protagonist's Psychodrama but give valuable insights and perceptions, and the group is seen as possessing enormous value and power in facilitating individual change. Much is possible when participants feel part of a group in which the freedom and support exists to express themselves freely with the knowledge that the other members share in and bear witness to their pain and struggle for change. The support and empathy from the group provides an important healing force: "Love and mutual sharing are powerful, indispensable working principles in group life" (Moreno in J. D. Moreno, 1989, p. 50). Through dramatic interactions with the group, the central protagonist is able to play roles he or she has long since lost or has never developed: "Group members begin to display in group interaction social roles which may have been dormant because they have not been reciprocated for some time" (Altman, 1983, p. 91). In a safe environment actors intensively re-experience, confront, and develop new understandings of and form new responses to difficult and painful events, relationships, and feelings:

Psychodrama enables the protagonist to build a bridge beyond the roles he plays in his daily existence, to surpass and transcend the reality of life as he lives it, to get into a deeper relationship
with existence, to come as close as possible to the highest form of encounter of which he is capable. (Moreno & Moreno in Martens, 1990, p. 22)

Although "staged", the interactions, perceptions, and emotions are very real and provoke encounters and engagement of the deepest truthfulness. In this sense, dramas are carried out which are different from those of the theatre and it is the actor who is the playwright and producer, involving group members who are active players rather than distanced spectators. At the same time elements of drama, condensed scenes, and heightened reality, inherent also in theatre, are present.

Another element central to Psychodrama is that of catharsis. Through spontaneity and "here and now" experiencing actors are able to express and release powerful and, in some cases, previously suppressed emotions. While the release and purging of emotions can be curative and freeing, more importantly catharsis leads to new understanding and integration: "The concept of catharsis in psychodrama involves not only a release of emotion, but an incorporation of new perceptions and cognitions" (Altman, 1983, p. 90). To Moreno, then, catharsis is seen beyond the definition of emotional expression to include shifts in understanding and new insights. In Moreno's (in Fox, 1987) own words, the protagonist "...has the opportunity to find and reorganize itself, to put the elements together which may have been kept apart by insidious forces, to integrate them and to obtain a sense of power and relief, a catharsis of integration" (p. 16). Insights gained in the immediate experiencing of the psychodrama are deepened and solidified through the sharing of the experience with other group members, including the perceptions and thoughts they have to offer in discussions following the actual psychodrama.

Psychodrama is founded upon Moreno's belief that therapy involves the alteration and expansion of roles using an approach that simulates real life in immediate, dramatic, and experiential ways. Spontaneity serves as a vital force in assisting protagonists in expressing and engaging in their dramatized realities. Catharsis emerges out of this intense and immensely real experience allowing for emotional release and new insights. The central group provides support and validation through an atmosphere of acceptance and caring. Ideally insight and learning gained in the psychodrama continue to play themselves out in a protagonist's "real" life.
Process and Techniques of Psychodrama

There are five central ingredients in a typical psychodrama: 1). The stage which provides the actors with a living space in which to express freely, away from the sometimes limited and restraining space of reality. 2). The protagonist or central actor who is asked to play himself or herself and draw upon his or her own life for the material of the enactment. 3). The director who acts as producer and counsellor, and must be alert to clues which the protagonist offers to the dramatic action and be an essential guide in the therapeutic process. 4). Auxiliary egos or fellow players who serve functional roles in enacting a protagonist's reality either as extensions of the protagonist or in playing existing people who are central to the protagonist's world. 5). The audience who shares in the psychodrama, shares perceptions and experiences afterwards, and can be called upon to become auxiliary egos (Moreno in Fox, 1987). A typical psychodrama also consists of three phases: the warm-up, the action or enactment, and the integration or sharing phase (Kelly, 1982). The warm-up lays the foundation for the enactment in which group members become acquainted with each other and build a sense of trust. As well, individuals who are to work on problems are identified and scenes are set for the following action. In the enactment phase the protagonist acts out, with the help of the group, past scenes, rehearses for future events, and attempts to seek resolution to troubling events, relationships, and emotions. Roles are challenged, altered, and experimented with, and new possibilities and understandings emerge. The integration phase involves a final sharing among group members in which all present can express the ways in which they have been affected by the psychodrama. It is a time when the protagonist can work through and solidify his or her experience with feedback and support from the group. This integration phase, according to Blatner (in Martens, 1990) does not end with the group session but can go on for months.

Within the enactment phase or actual psychodrama a vast number of techniques are available for use, of which only a few will be mentioned here. These techniques are intended to simulate reality and move the individual beyond to certain dimensions of reality not fully experienced or expressed. One of the most popular techniques is that of role reversal in which the protagonist reverses roles with the person with whom he or she is having difficulties. Another technique or instrument is that of the auxiliary ego which involves representation of absent individuals, symbols, ideals, objects, and even inner aspects of the protagonist (Moreno in Fox, 1987). As an example, the protagonist may portray himself or herself while
an auxiliary ego doubles as another side of the protagonist's personality. As well, when the protagonist is unable to express himself or herself, an auxiliary ego can mirror or become the protagonist while the protagonist observes. Psychodrama can involve not only the reenactment of past events and interactions but can offer rehearsal and exploration of future plans and new ways of being, as well as providing opportunities to create new endings to old stories.

In theatre, while actors are often encouraged to use aspects of themselves in order to bring life to a character, overall the playing of "oneself" on stage is not the central objective. In Psychodrama, however, the central protagonist's reality and life are the central focus of the dramatic action. The protagonist picks the time, place, and scene, creates the story, and casts the roles. Moreno himself saw theatre as an imitation of life, a step removed from real life with the use of memorized scripts written by individuals unrelated to the actors. To Moreno, Psychodrama offered "real life" acting in which no group member is a passive observer (Martens, 1990). While Moreno emphasized differences between theatre and Psychodrama, there are also obvious similarities between the two realms. Directors, actors, audiences, stages, roles, and scenes exist in both and each offer a kind of condensed reality and intensification of experience which rarely exists in every day life. Both are experiential and dynamic, possess strong elements of enactment and ritual, offer dramas which are microcosms of larger social contexts, and both represent life and relationships, albeit in different ways and for different purposes.

**Drama Therapy**

Drama Therapy is similar to Psychodrama in it's use of role playing, spontaneity, and representational experience. However, Drama Therapy embraces other dramatic media such as puppets, masks, theatre performance, story telling, and story dramatization. Unlike psychodramatists, drama therapists are required to master the fundamentals of theatre, performance, and improvisational drama. Similar to Psychodrama is the perception of psychological health involving a wide repertoire of roles, implying choice, flexibility, and the ability to change one's behaviour in relation to different situations and people (Landy, 1986). Drama Therapy is based on group interaction and relies heavily on the use of improvisational techniques and exercises. Rather than focusing on the re-creation of the experiences and relationships from an individual's own life, loosely structured dramatic techniques and exercises are utilized through which aspects of the self and patterns of behaviour can naturally emerge: "...a vague
situation is all that has been defined and the actual personality to be played is spontaneously created by the actor" (Johnson, 1982, p. 85). The aspects of the personality which emerge become the focus of exploration and the therapist learns much from the general "style" of an individual's participation. Like Psychodrama, the stage becomes a microcosm of real life where individuals can have the freedom to experiment with alternative roles and gain insights through spontaneous interaction in an environment removed from everyday reality.

Drama Therapy, similar to Psychodrama, aims to increase a client's repertoire of roles and his or her ability to play a single role more fully and effectively. The objective is to assist individuals in changing from limited behaviours and thoughts to developing more flexible and varied interactions. An expansion of role repertoire is believed to lead to a greater sense of choice and flexibility (Blatner in Pendzik, 1988). As well, Drama Therapy is based on the assumption that creative expression and the encouragement of an innate capacity for "play" facilitates psychological health and insight (Johnson in Schattner & Courtenay, 1981). Drama Therapy moves beyond verbal therapies to become accessible to those for whom verbalization is more difficult and limited and, fundamentally, participation in a creative and expressive art is seen as having inherent therapeutic value.

Drama Therapy is based on the creation of dramatic opportunities in which individual personalities and styles emerge through improvisational techniques and exercises. These dramatic "vehicles" are loosely defined but sufficient enough to facilitate the spontaneous emergence of aspects of the self: "the unstructured nature of role playing (for example) allows many aspects of the self to emerge, some under the control of the individual, some not" (Johnson, 1982, p. 85). In improvisational structures an individual is forced to call upon inner ideas, memories, and images to use as material for the exercise. Whatever is chosen has unique and important meaning for that person and has been determined by experiences, perceptions, past interactions, and the present situation as he or she perceives it (Schattner & Courtenay, 1981). Everything that is created, therefore, has meaning to the creator, improvisations are intimately connected to one's real life, and recurring patterns of behaviour naturally emerge. It is the processes within the group or individual which are inhibiting free expression that become the focus for the therapist. Interventions center on that which is disrupting spontaneous play (Johnson, 1982). Through relatively unstructured activities an individual's interpersonal style and personal difficulties emerge and,
faced with a lack of structure, individuals will often choose familiar responses which lower anxieties. Therapists focus on the impasses in improvisational exercises as these often reflect problems which clients have in real life. More specifically, a therapist may look at a number of characteristics which might indicate areas of difficulty for an individual. Spontaneity, according to Johnson (in Schattner & Courtenay, 1981) involves the ability to act responsively to situations and requires some self confidence, emotional control, and adaptive capacity. An individual’s level of spontaneity may alert a therapist to problems upon which to focus. An individual's ability to concentrate, persevere, and exhibit self discipline in a task or exercise can also be important characteristics to note, as well as a participant's capacity to transcend reality and move into more symbolic, representational mediums that are involved in role playing and using one's imagination in pretend "play". Information about an individual can be gained by observing how he or she organizes scenes which reveals methods of organizing thought, the number of characters a person can represent in any one interaction which reveals complexity of thought, and the ability he or she exhibits to view a situation from a number of different perspectives. As Drama Therapy is based on the premise that a broad and well developed repertoire of roles indicates psychological health and maturity, the ability an individual reveals to develop roles and characters in improvisational exercises can provide important information. Creating a role involves the ability to construct people, events, and emotions, as well as knowledge of or experience with a range of social roles and situations. Empathy is also required to guide the inner understanding of a role and an adequate characterization involves the ability to maintain a consistent image of that role that does not blur or become confused with another. As Johnson (in Schattner & Courtney) explains: "... gaps and deficiencies in the person's system of representing the world internally will usually be reflected in the difficulties met in creating a believable and full characterization" (p. 20).

At this time three concepts, distancing, spontaneity, and the unconscious, require explication as they are central to understanding the way in which dramatic exercises are used within Drama Therapy to address psychological difficulties. Distancing is key to Drama Therapy and can be linked to the previously mentioned importance of roles. The concept of the self in the dramatic model is based on roles and the self changes as roles change. The self is essentially one's uniqueness, distinguishing one person from another. As no two theatrical actors play a role the same way, similarly each individual person will
form roles based not only on relationships with others but also on the unique characteristics of the self. Paradoxically, then, the self both determines the quality of the roles and is determined by the roles adopted and played out (Landy, 1986). People often have a tendency to identify too closely with a role or separate themselves too greatly. A balanced distance between the self and role indicates healthy functioning. The process of distancing in Drama Therapy involves helping an individual find a balanced psychic position between an overdistant state of repression and an underdistant state of emotional flooding, so that catharsis and equilibrium can occur. In this balanced state an individual can make sense of his or her dilemma or difficulty (Landy, 1984). For the drama therapist distancing is relevant in that much of the therapeutic work is based on examining the dialectics of actor and observer, self and role, and one role and another role: "...it is in exploring the degree of separation and closeness within these relationships that goals are realized" (Landy, 1983, p. 175). The overdistant persons are those who need rigid boundaries between themselves and others and who tend to emphasize cognitive or analytical styles of functioning and interacting. Underdistant persons are the opposite, characterized by emotional closeness, and a lack of boundaries between self and other. Overcontrolled persons can be viewed as generally rigid, disconnected, and alienated with limited role repertoire; the underdistant person can be seen as vulnerable, needy, and lacking in emotional control, with too expansive a role repertoire (Landy, 1986). At the center of the distancing paradigm is a balance between the two extremes which is called aesthetic distance. At this point a person is able to both think and feel and simultaneously play the role of the actor who relives the past and the observer who remembers the past. When this balance is achieved catharsis occurs which contains moments of recognition and insight. Drama therapists therefore aim to assist clients in finding a balance between participation and observation where they relive emotions but are not overwhelmed by them: "...through the simultaneity of participant and observer role playing, the client will have the capacity to re-experience and see clearly that which was formerly repressed" (Landy, 1983, p. 184). As well, at aesthetic distance an overdistanting individual is freed to expand role repertoire, while an underdistant individual gains sufficient distance to improve role effectiveness and clarity.

Spontaneity is also a central element to Drama Therapy as it is interruptions in spontaneous behaviour which become indicators of role flexibility and overall functioning. Spontaneity is linked to
distancing as it is at the moments of aesthetic distance that individuals are at their most spontaneous: "It is the creative moment, the moment of infinite possibilities, the moment of play, the moment when the unconscious is accessible and ready to be symbolized through dramatic action" (Landy, 1986, pp. 104-5). The spontaneous person is able to merge self and role together while remaining aware of the existence of both. While in a spontaneous state such an individual is able to find a mid point between two realities. An underdistanced person loses himself or herself within a role while an overdistanced person clings to prescribed and controlled methods and experiences spontaneity as threatening. Such apprehension is understandable but ultimately limiting:

Living in the spontaneous moment is risky, because one fears the unknown. It is safer to appear before an audience with a prepared speech than to improvise "off the top of one's head" ...But the risks are tempered by the gain in self esteem. By trusting what one does know and then letting that knowledge go, one learns to value a deeper sense of one's wisdom. (Landy, 1986, pp. 105-6)

The notion of the unconscious is at the heart of Drama Therapy as theatre exercises are used to assist individuals in accessing feelings and experiences possibly not within their immediate awareness. An improvisation becomes a kind of projective technique in which a loose structure is provided to enable unconscious material to emerge. As the unconscious is not available directly to human awareness but can be expressed in the form of images and symbols, Drama Therapy provides such a medium as it operates at a symbolic level of reality. At the moment of spontaneity and at aesthetic distance, the unconscious is accessible and in this state an individual is able to give form to feelings without being overwhelmed by them. A challenge for the drama therapist is assisting an individual to arrive at a spontaneous state and express unconscious feelings through appropriate imagery. Movement, sound or visual images all give aesthetic form to the inner life of the artist or client. Using more specific examples, the use of puppets, masks, and storytelling, and the playing of a character offer symbolic means of projecting aspects of the self onto other forms or objects. Such dramatic activities access the unconscious as the self expresses itself through indirect forms or structures.

In accessing the unconscious and in identifying impasses in spontaneous action, difficulties with improvisational style, and imbalances in distancing between self and role, the intent is to facilitate discovery and insight through dramatic and symbolic forms. Ultimately, the final goal is to expand an individual's role effectiveness and repertoire. In assisting recurring patterns to emerge the therapist helps
the individual to become aware of such patterns and examine reasons why they occur. Through improvisational exercises the drama therapist assists individuals in representing difficulties and imbalances and moving toward establishing a balance of distance through role playing and catharsis. While individuals have developed difficulties in their "real" lives, it is through an environment removed from reality that they are able to re-create problem areas so they can be recognized, understood, and a more functional self can emerge. In this way two realities are represented - the everyday and that removed from the everyday by means of a change in environment or consciousness. In a representational environment an individual can re-enact scenes and roles from real life in order to understand them better and then re-integrate them back into everyday environments (Landy, 1982). It is in this balance between the two realities of the everyday and the dramatized, that understanding and change are possible. It is, in fact, a simultaneous combination of that which is real and that which is possible or never before imagined or experienced. Within the framework of dramatic exercises individuals can discover new ways and means of interacting and achieving goals. Because one is in fact "acting" or "playing" there is a greater permission to be different and experiment with alternatives. Expansion of role repertoire therefore becomes possible as new capabilities are discovered:

> Discovering the capability of portraying a given emotion suggests a potential capacity to experience this emotion again in real life. Self image is expanded and often altered through the improvisational scenes which offer a huge range of roles...In drama, there is always a choice of roles and behaviours. (Emunah, 1983, p. 79)

As individuals take insights and experiences from Drama Therapy back into their daily lives they have gained not only an awareness of issues or difficulties and an expansion of role repertoire and flexibility, they have experienced aesthetic distance which engenders an improved ability to balance role flexibility and creativity with role definition and clarity. Like many therapies, Drama Therapy seeks to restore psychic balance but does so through working in the imaginary, symbolic level of reality, and balance is restored through working with the self as it relates to role. As well, creative enactment alone "...carries with it the seeds of a therapeutic act" (Pendzik, 1988, p. 83).

**Techniques**

As has been mentioned, Drama Therapy relies heavily on improvisational techniques and exercises and, in fact, encompasses a vast and eclectic repertoire of methods which are used to facilitate an
This range of techniques can include: storytelling, projective forms such as puppets, masks, makeup, and videos, and psychodramatic techniques such as role-reversal and doubling (Landy, 1983). Dramatic techniques can, in addition, include exercises in sensory awareness, movement, pantomime, dramatic play, story dramatization, role playing, and simulation (Landy, 1982). The range of techniques is virtually unlimited but approaches are best which stress the use of creative theatre as a medium for self expression and group interaction, and which base their techniques on improvisational and theatre exercises. In selecting techniques the therapist observes the participants and gathers information from the impasses and difficulties they are experiencing in the improvisations. Some approaches, for example, foster overdistancing or underdistancing. Distance can be increased or decreased to move an individual gradually towards greater balance. At one pole of the distance continuum an individual might enact a story from his or her own life, thereby re-experiencing intense emotion. At the other end of the pole an individual might need to over distance through telling a story which does not overtly relate to his or her own life. Exercises may be selected depending on whether individuals need to increase their level of participation or observation within a role.

**Interdisciplinary Roots**

Drama Therapy theorists maintain that Drama Therapy has its origins in several disciplines: anthropology, sociology, psychotherapy, and theatre. Anthropology and history reveal the timeless presence and importance of enactment, ritual and play, as well as the healing nature of drama: "Ritual, magic, and shamanism serve as excellent sources for drama therapy because they combine healing and performance and proceed through acts of imagination" (Landy, 1986, p. 69). Enactment and representation through dramatic means, which are the basis to Drama Therapy, can be linked to timeless cultural and religious practices. In creating a representational world separate from everyday reality so that therapeutic action can take place, Drama Therapy embodies the fundamentals of ritual: "The idea that performance can transcend reality, and hence, have an impact on it, is the rationale underlying most ritual practices" (Pendzik, 1988, p. 89).

Much of the discussion concerning self and role can be linked to sociological theory. The concept of distancing and finding a balance between two extremes on a psychic continuum can be related to sociologist George Herbert Mead who defined the self in two parts: the "I" which is more impulsive and
independent and embodies the imaginative and creative side of reality, and the "Me" which is the socially determined part and is conservative, controlling and located in the objective realm of everyday reality (Landy, 1986). The dialectic in Drama Therapy between imagination and reality, overdistancing and underdistancing, and the search for psychic balance echo the dialectic between the "I" and "Me". Of note is the fact that drama and theatre have served as a source for sociological theory, most importantly in providing the concept of role.

In the area of psychology, Drama Therapy clearly benefits from Freud's concept of the unconscious, which is at the heart aesthetic experience in which unconscious material is given form through symbolic means. Four key psychoanalytical concepts are central to Drama Therapy: transference, countertransference, projection, and identification, all of which are based in a symbolic role-taking process (Landy, 1986). With its emphasis on enactment, imagination, and play, it is not surprising that Drama Therapy has parallels with Play Therapy which is especially used in child psychotherapy. As has been noted, Drama Therapy also finds strong links with Psychodrama. Both view psychological health as involving effective and extensive role repertoires and both use dramatic means such as improvisation, role play, and enactment to reach therapeutic ends. To Landy (1984), Psychodrama is both a theoretical root of Drama Therapy and a series of techniques that can be subsumed under the larger umbrella of Drama Therapy practices. Within Drama Therapy some psychodramatic methods are utilized to facilitate underdistancing as the protagonist usually plays himself or herself and is asked to relive life experiences. The use of an auxiliary ego or double might assist an individual in overdistancing when he or she is overwhelmed by emotion.

Probably the greatest difference between Drama Therapy and other therapies is reflected in its relationship to the theatre. For drama therapists training in the dramatic arts and mastering the fundamentals of theatre performance and improvisation are required and they are expected to learn the media of dramatic arts such as play, improvisation, storytelling and theatre performance, including more stylized techniques of puppetry, mask, makeup, props, and costumes. Using principles and practices of theatre performance means learning acting and directing as well as theories of theatre. Drama Therapy also differs from theatre in its emphasis on improvisation within a role as opposed to playing a scripted character as "...a script imposes a structure and content upon the actor's words and meanings and the
personality of the playwright becomes mingled with that of the actor" (Johnson in Schattner & Courtenay, 1981, p. 15). The improvisational techniques of Viola Spolin, Keith Johnstone, and others are extensively utilized, as improvisational roles reflect and reveal more of the natural self. Links between other theatre theories and drama therapy are also evident. Stanislavski's psychological approach to acting, which involves accessing unconscious material and affective memory through conscious and indirect means in order to bring life to a character, is not too far removed from Drama Therapy's similar use of symbolic and dramatic methods to access and bring forth the unconscious. Brecht's concept of alienation strongly relates to Drama Therapy's use of distancing (Landy, 1983). Brecht's theatre was based upon emotional overdistancing in order to encourage rational and analytical responses to drama rather than succumbing to irrational and emotional over-identification with characters which cloud judgement and critical thinking. While concepts of distancing and catharsis have been borrowed from theatre they have been further extended and adapted in therapy. While Brecht focused strongly on overdistancing, therapeutic approaches seek to correct imbalances and find equilibrium between extremes. While actors and directors are not in the business of Drama Therapy, it is equally true that they are in a profession concerned with expression of feelings, empathy, catharsis, revelation of character, and the ability to enact a wide repertoire of roles. Both deal with fundamental issues of life and experience and both work toward assisting an individual in achieving a fully functioning representation of a character (Landy, 1982). Both dramatic acting and Drama Therapy also require an individual to access a wide variety of emotions and experiences while maintaining distance or separation, a balance between participant and observer. The crucial difference between theatre and Drama Therapy, of course, is the ultimate goals of each, one being primarily aesthetic while the other being therapeutic. This does not exclude the possibility, however, for the experience of theatre to be therapeutic or for Drama Therapy to be aesthetic.

**Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT)**

Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) is a therapeutic use of drama which involves the taking on of a new role or character. Based on George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory, FRT assumes that "...clients can profit from undertaking a comprehensive change in their life patterns for a brief period of time" (Epting & Nazario, 1987, p. 277). A client is assisted in creating a written characterization of himself or herself and then a new characterization is written which describes the new role a client will play for a temporary
period of time. The new enactment sketch is designed to offer a client the opportunity to explore alternative approaches and behaviours and is intended to be an experiment, not an attempt to change the client's behaviours (Epting, 1984). Therefore the role is not necessarily one that anyone wishes the client to actually adopt. The sketch contains some of the same central qualities the client possesses as well as characteristics very different from the client. Together with the therapist the client experiments with the role intensely for a brief period of time and at the end the client is invited to give up the role and assess the experience. Essential to the understanding of this therapy is the concept that change and growth can occur through "trying on" a character different from oneself. It is an invitation to experiment with new ways of being and to then appraise the outcomes.

**Personal Construct Theory**

Because FRT is an approach based on George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (PCT) it is necessary to outline the core concepts of this psychological orientation. Kelly's most fundamental assumption is that human beings are essentially interpretive and are always in the process of attributing meaning to their experience (Neimeyer, 1987). Individuals seek to understand, predict, and control the course of their lives which leads them to searching for regularity, tendencies, and patterns upon which to base hypotheses or constructs. Thus differences between people have less to do with events or "factual" realities as they do with the unique constructions individuals place upon events: "All people experience events, perceive similarities, and differences among these events, formulate concepts or constructs to order phenomena and, on the basis of these constructs, seek to anticipate events" (Pervin, 1980, p. 180). Kelly relies heavily on the image of the scientist when outlining his concepts. Like scientists, individuals attempt to devise hypotheses which render events understandable and predictable. Just as scientists develop alternative theories to explain phenomena, individuals interpret and reinterpret, construe and reconstrue their environments (Pervin, 1980). To Kelly the ability to form many constructs and alter those constructs based on new and changing information indicates psychological health. Those with the greatest number of available interpretations have greater selection and ability to differentiate among different situations and people. While it is inevitable that constructs will be challenged by new information and experiences, individuals encounter difficulties when they continue to use constructs repeatedly despite consistent invalidation: "...the inability to successfully revise one's construing when it is
disconfirmed can be considered a hallmark of psychological disturbance" (Neimeyer, 1987, p. 7). Some personal constructs are more central to an individual than others and it is core constructs around which basic assumptions and beliefs are formed that are most resistant to change. Inevitably a construct is only convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events (Kelly in Neimeyer, 1987). Anxiety is experienced when events are confronted which lie outside the range of an individual's construct system. Faced with this reality individuals may expand a construct or constrict options, functioning, and experiencing in order to lessen the threat. In some instances individuals may be caught between a desire to expand their construct system and a desire to avoid the disruption of that system. Important to Kelly's theory is the understanding of anxiety, not as an unhealthy or negative emotion to be eradicated, but as an indicator or signal that change is required.

Positive change involves the development of better construct systems; therapy therefore becomes a process of reconstruing (Pervin, 1980) and of collaborating with the client in revealing and testing those constructions connected with the psychological distress. Of note are the therapist's roles in this process of co-researcher and collaborator. The therapist must be willing to learn with the client and take seriously a client's unique construction of reality. Underlying Kelly's approach to therapy is a fundamental respect for the dignity of the person and the truth which is inherent in a client's thinking (Neimeyer, 1987). It is also part of a therapist's role to provide clients with experiences and allow them to construe and reconstrue those experiences for themselves. The objective in therapy is not to elicit changes in behaviour but to view behaviour as an experimental instrument and means of inquiry: "Kelly saw a therapist's role largely in terms of the restoration of the predictive effectiveness of that model (the construct system), through the creation of situations in which the individual could experiment with alternative ways of construing and acting" (Jankowitcz, 1987, p. 482). In therapy efforts to improve constructs therefore adopt an "as if" quality in which enactment and experiments invite a client to attempt alternatives in a safe setting. Creating a supportive and accepting environment becomes important in freeing a client to entertain the possibility of new alternatives. It is crucial to "...establish the 'invitational mood' in which one is free to invite many alternative interpretations of phenomena, to entertain propositions that, initially, may seem absurd" (Pervin, 1980, p. 181).
FRT Theory

The formation of FRT as a possible approach to therapy emerged out of Kelly's PCT and a gradual accumulation of observations gathered over time. He observed, for instance, that participation in dramatic productions frequently had a lasting effect upon the behaviour and adjustment of participating students (Kelly, 1955). A second observation in relation to dramatic plays involved the heightened ability individuals demonstrated in expressing themselves within a new role:

It appeared persons were able to express themselves in certain parts with a spontaneity and vehemence which could not wholly be explained on the basis of their understanding of the playwright's intent. It was as if they had just found a verbal vehicle not ordinarily available to them for expressing ideas...In most instances this new behaviour, carried out within the containment of the rehearsal situation, seemed to be followed by a general increase in influency, both verbal and behavioural. (Kelly, 1955, p. 363)

A third observation was related to "spur of the moment" variations in therapy in which"make believe" or hypothetical variations were introduced which contrasted with a client's current reality - these explorations often freed clients to entertain new ideas and "opened the door to further exploration". A fourth type of observation evolved from suprising success with measures taken to assist clients while they awaited to receive counselling. A course of activity and interests was outlined for clients during the wait period and in a number of instances clients no longer felt they required assistance and felt they had been helped. This suggested that change can evolve sometimes for individuals when they simply experience doing something different. Kelly also observed instances in which individuals had changed their conceptualizations of themselves and, in seeking readjustment, had seized upon new roles and labels for themselves. All these observations led Kelly to reflect upon the possible benefits of offering clients who seek therapy a new self, a new role, and a new name.

FRT is an approach whereby a client is invited to assume an identity other than his or her own for a brief period of time in order to possibly experience the world differently (Epting, 1984). Clients are encouraged to view the world as if they were a different type of person to see what that new perspective might offer. Crucial to this approach is the concept of experimentation is which the client is the chief investigator. The temporary period of time in which a client "tries on" a new character is akin to a
scientific experiment in which a hypothesis is tested. At no time is the objective to be for the client to adopt the new character or exchange his or her own personality for that of the character. The key to the experience, then, is for the new character to remain a comprehensive hypothesis rather than a real person. In the true vein of experimentation the new character sketch is not designed to "cure" or "fix" a client's difficulties and the exercise cannot become a way to get a client to change certain behaviours:

...no-one really knows what the client should be like, but this particular perspective contained in the sketch just might contain something that the client could learn to use and then later come to value, but on the other hand it might be something she would clearly want to reject. The only way to tell is to try it out for a while to see what does happen. (Epting, 1984, p. 162)

The context of experimentation offers an important element of protection for a client which may assist him or her in entertaining new ways of construing events. Kelly himself states that the client is to be given "the full protection of make believe" as this offers the opportunity to "explore his world without wholly and irrevocably committing himself" (Kelly, 1955, p. 373). This pretend quality not only frees up a client's ability to try new alternatives without the fear of irrevocable commitment but also reduces the possibility of a client's sense of self being undermined and the possible threat to an individual's core constructs. In merely "acting" a part without the suggestion that he or she should become the new character sketch, the integrity of a client's own personality is preserved and, as Kelly (1955) observed in his "experiments": "...whenever the new role smacked of being an admonition the client's response was reluctant and the procedure tended to be ineffective" (p. 379). Thus the client is invited to participate in a creative rather than a repair process. Important to this is that the client is not asked to give up his or her former perspectives, only to explore new ones. In this way change can take place without the client having to give up central constructs and therapeutic results can be attained with as little disturbance as possible. This is much like "..the task of rebuilding a ship while it is under full sail" (Epting, 1984, p. 159). As well, at the end of the enactment period it is the client who appraises the experience in whatever way is most meaningful to him or her and interprets the events in terms of his or her own personal constructs (Adams-Webber in Corsini, 1981).

The Therapy Process

The first step in FRT is for clients to write brief character sketches of themselves from the perspective of someone who knows them well, such as a sympathetic and caring friend, or as if they were the principal
character in a play. This self characterization assists the therapist in determining how clients use their personal constructs to create self concepts and structure their behaviour in a variety of different situations. The knowledge gained from this sketch which reflects clients' world views is then used upon which to base the next step in therapy, the enactment or fixed-role sketch. In writing the sketch the therapist is particularly aware of the constructs in the self characterization which imply immobility and indicate difficulties. The sketch offers constructs different than those of the client and ideally offers at least one hypothesis to be tested. Kelly (1955) recommends the presence of a contrasting dimension which is novel and challenging to the client. While contrast is important, it is also necessary for the role to fit realistically with the situations and people that confront the client. The therapist must be certain that the client sees the role as a tangible, possible person and as someone interesting and attractive to play. This is partially accomplished by the enactment sketch including some core constructs which the client currently possesses. It should be noted, however, that some therapists emphasize the inclusion of opposite constructs in the enactment sketch and are less concerned with including core constructs familiar and known to the client (Epting & Nazario, 1987). It should also be noted that some therapists advocate that clients be involved in the writing of the fixed-role sketch.

Once the fixed-role sketch is ready it is presented as a sketch of a new person that the client is invited to "become" for approximately two weeks. During this enactment period the therapist and client meet frequently to plan specific experiments and to evaluate their outcomes. The client is instructed to read the sketch every day and to act, talk, eat, and even, if possible, dream the way the new character would (Adams-Webber, 1981). During the therapy sessions the client and therapist rehearse interpersonal situations the client will likely encounter, starting with less difficult situations such as interactions with a supervisor, boss or teacher, and then moving on to progressively more complex interactions such as those with a peer, a spouse or lover, parents and family, to, finally, philosophical or religious discussions. After each interaction or "experiment" in real life, the client reports the outcomes to the therapist and the next one is planned. After the enactment period has ended the client is invited to appraise the entire experience. It is important that the fixed-role is abandoned regardless of how valuable the enactment has been and that the client is left with what has been learned and discovered.
Often clients are initially skeptical of their ability to enact the role. The first few attempts, in fact, are often accompanied by reports of failure and half-hearted attempts. The judgement as to success or failure should not, therefore, be made until the whole enactment period has been played out. In fact "...the client who finds the experience disruptively novel, and whose first expressions in the new part are quite clumsy and inept, may be more deeply affected by the enactment than the skilled actress" (Adams-Webber, 1981, p. 338). A role picked up too easily may not sufficiently challenge a client's construct system. It is to be expected that clients will initially feel that they are "just acting". When clients show signs that they have momentarily forgotten that they are just acting then true elaborative behaviour is taking place and the clients are experimenting with new ways of construing situations. One of the hallmarks of progress is clients reporting that others have told them that they seem different (Kelly, 1955). One of the most interesting outcomes of FRT, according to Kelly, is the adoption by some clients of a new role that is neither like the fixed role nor like the one they described in the original self characterization.

The role of the therapist is that of a "research supervisor" with the client as the "principal investigator" (Adams-Webber, 1981). It is not the job of the therapist to present reality to the client but to assist the client in ways of learning through experimentation so that clients may reach their own conclusions. The therapist does not tell people what they should "be", but suggests what they might "try out" (Kelly, 1955). FRT is unique in that the therapist is expected to explore his or her own creativity and be willing to risk with the client in playing various roles. When rehearsing the fixed-role sketch the therapist plays the various people in the client's life and must do so with depth and sympathy, accepting that he or she may be inaccurate and imperfect in the portrayals: "By accepting his vulnerability the therapist may help the patient to accept his own fumbling. Since the patient is not confronted with the 'perfect other', FRT is a really human, a really joint exercise of two individual persons" (Bonarius, 1970, p. 218). The therapist therefore, invites the client to engage "in a controlled investigation of life" (Kelly, 1979, p. 60) and assists in the playing of a "human drama" (Pervin, 1980, p. 212).

Clearly there are very strong connections between FRT and the theatre. Both involve the taking on of roles and characters, the enactment sketch of FRT is similar to a kind of theatrical script or character description, both involve rehearsal and both lead to the enactment and portrayal of a role. Unlike other
drama-based therapies, FRT involves, like theatre, the taking on of a role different than oneself. However, like other therapies, FRT uses dramatic elements for different reasons. The enactment or portrayal is actively and consciously carried out in one's own life beyond the confines of the stage and the role playing centers around real life interactions and relationships. The therapist is expected to participate in the rehearsal process through role playing, while the director in theatre usually directs the interactions among a group of actors. As well, the enactment sketch is created by the therapist and client and is tailored to the client's own situation, in contrast to the portrayal of a character written by a separate playwright. In this way the client is testing out his or her own hypotheses rather than being a protagonist in a drama of which he or she is not the author. Despite these differences FRT most closely resembles performance theatre in it's emphasis on character creation, rehearsal, and enactment.

In relation to Psychodrama, Moreno emphasizes the re-enactment of scenes from a client's life and experience using dramatic techniques which can result in insights and catharsis. In FRT however, the client enacts the part of an altogether different person which may offer alternative experiences and possible new ways of constructing situations. Psychodrama's power lies in interaction and re-creation within a group experience. FRT's power lies in the rehearsal and then experimentation of an alternative role within real life situations. While approaches differ in both therapies, both see the expansion and increased effectiveness of an individual's role repertoire as therapeutic goals and indicators of psychological health.

FRT, therefore, is based upon the premise that people create their own realities which can be challenged and changed through experiments and exposure to alternate ways of constructing experience. In "trying on" a character one encounters the possibility of being different: "You suddenly realize: If I can act in a different way I can be different. If I can be different from what I think I am, I can change" (Bonarius, 1970, p. 213).
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

As this study is attempting to understand the nature of an experience and how that experience may bear on bodies of knowledge, it seems most appropriate to use a qualitative rather than quantitative research approach. In seeking to answer a question such as, "What is the experience of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played?", it is necessary to adopt a methodology which is flexible and open to what emerges, with the intent being to preserve the original quality of the actors' descriptions as much as possible in order to truly convey the nature of those experiences. As well, theatre by its artistic nature is difficult to quantify:

...in a discipline that is concerned primarily with unobservable phenomena i.e., insight, feeling, and creative processes, empirical, behavioral research should be tempered with more qualitative approaches...there is a need to develop new means of evaluation that are qualitative and dramatic in nature. (Landy, 1984, p.89)

In his article, "Research and Scholarship in the Creative Art Therapies", S. A. McNiff (1987) suggests that there are "realms of knowledge and experience that can be grasped only through forms that correspond to their passion, complexity, and illusiveness" (p. 291). Qualitative, and more specifically, phenomenological, research methods seem most appropriate in attempting to address the broad question this study is seeking to answer. As well, little previous research in this area exists upon which to build, which further emphasizes the necessity for methodology which is open and exploratory in nature.

In phenomenological research the task is to create an account that is faithful to each individual description while working toward describing a common structure or whole which captures or makes up a phenomenon (Cochran & Claspell, 1987). In this study many aspects of P. F. Colaizzi's approach (in Valle & King, 1978) to phenomenological study were adopted and adapted. In the following sections the components of Colaizzi's theory will be briefly outlined, followed by a description of the ways in which each component has been adapted for use in this study.

Sensitization to the topic

According to Colaizzi, the researcher must first explicate any suppositions about the phenomenon in question to prepare for the research. This involves a review of assumptions and an examination of related authors, the purpose being to sensitize the researcher to existing knowledge related to the phenomena. In this study three bodies of knowledge were examined in preparation for the actual interviews. In
particular, reviewing the three drama-based therapies sensitized the researcher to possible links between the acting experiences being examined and these therapies. The review of existing published accounts of actors' experiences also served to prepare the researcher for some probable outcomes and formed the basis for possible assumptions. The reality, as well, that the researcher had studied and subsequently worked professionally in theatre for several years suggests that the researcher commenced this study with significant background knowledge and was sensitized to the subject matter. In actual fact, it was out of this prior experience in professional theatre that the question which forms the basis for this study arose. While knowledge of psychological theory is important in this study, an intimate knowledge of theatre is also advantageous in ensuring that both disciplines are treated with integrity and are adequately understood and represented. Regarding this combination of art and psychology, psychologist Rudolf Arnheim (in S. A. McNiff, 1987) suggests that intimate knowledge of the art experience may be necessary in order to conduct valid research in this area.

Research Participants

Colaizzi uses the term "co-researcher" rather than the traditional term of "subject" in referring to research participants, in order to capture the sense of collaboration and equality aspired toward in phenomenological research and to promote an atmosphere conducive to the sharing of experiences. According to Colaizzi, co-researchers are selected according to two criteria: a) each person must have had the experience; and b) each person must be able to articulate the experience. In this study co-researchers were selected through contacts the researcher had within the professional theatre community. They were initially reached through a letter outlining the study and invited to contact the researcher. If the actors wished to participate, felt they had experienced being personally affected by characters they had played, and felt they could articulate the experience, an interview was arranged. A total of ten actors were individually interviewed once for two to three hours and all interviews were audiotaped with the actors' signed consent. The number of actors interviewed was not pre-determined but decided by actors available for contact, number of actors able to participate, and an intent to ensure a sufficient quantity of information for the study while still limiting the amount of material obtained to a manageable level for the size and scope of this study.
The Interview

Colaizzi emphasizes that, in seeking to understand a phenomenon, a researcher must begin by contacting that phenomenon as people experience it. The success of research questions depends on the extent to which they tap the subject's experiences of the phenomenon. In this study each co-researcher was interviewed once by the researcher and asked to describe the experience of taking on a role from beginning to end and how that experience affected him or her. This intentionally open and general question was asked with a receptiveness on the part of the researcher to the experiences the actor wished to communicate, and a desire to simply see what emerged. In order to obtain an account as true to the actor's own experience as possible, the researcher attempted to assist, but not interfere with, the telling of the co-researcher's "story" through the use of empathy, questioning, clarifying, probing, and paraphrasing. Towards the end of the interview, when the actor had completed his or her account, the researcher asked specific questions which had been generated from the researcher's own theatre experience and the examination of related bodies of knowledge.

Analysis

All audiotaped interviews were transcribed so they could be reviewed in written form. Colaizzi outlines a process which involves reading the co-researchers' descriptions and then, from each, extracting significant statements which pertain to the investigated phenomenon. Formulated meanings which attempt to capture the meaning of each significant statement are defined. These meanings are then clustered into themes. These themes must account for that which is contained in the co-researchers' original descriptions. Some themes may contradict each other or appear to be unrelated however, it is important that the researcher formulates an exhaustive description which captures the true nature of the phenomenon as completely as possible. A final step can be achieved by returning to the participants and having them validate the findings. Any new data which emerge are worked into the final product.

In this study transcripts of each interview were read and significant statements which related to the phenomenon were identified. The essential meaning of each significant statement was paraphrased and listed. These meaning statements were then further condensed into a list which represented all same or strongly similar statements only once. From this list, five main themes emerged. Each meaning statement was reviewed and categorized in relation to these five main themes. Of the five themes, one was chosen
as primary for each meaning statement. Instances in which a statement pertained to more than one theme were noted. The five main themes also broke down into sub themes and it was these five themes and their sub themes which came to form the essential structure for the narrative analysis. As well, an overarching framework which emerged was that of a dialectic which provided a larger context in which to place the five central themes. The researcher then returned to the original transcripts and extracted all significant statements, which had been initially identified, for similar categorizing and coding, as was done for the meaning statements. This was done to organize the statements for use in the writing of the narrative analysis as well as to further test the validity of the five themes and sub themes by seeing if the original statements clearly and legitimately fell into these categories.

The narrative analysis, divided into five main sections, outlined each theme and its sub themes, with extensive use of the actors' own words and descriptions; original statements were interwoven throughout the analysis to verify and support themes proposed or statements made by the researcher. This was intended to provide the reader with sufficient original "data" to determine the validity of the researcher's work.

To protect the identity of the co-researchers all identifying information was deleted and none of the actors' real names were used; replacement names were used in the analysis section when indicating the source of original statements.

At the end of each of the five thematic sections the analysis was related to the three drama-based therapies which were outlined in the literature review.

Throughout the analysis process the goal was for the themes and categories to emerge from the actors' experiences. The structure and method of organizing the material were not pre-determined or imposed but were instructed by the original material itself. In this way it was hoped that the actors' experiences would be preserved and communicated in as authentic a manner as possible.
CHAPTER THREE: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In analyzing and presenting the information which has emerged from the interviews, the concept of a "dialectic" will be used, as it assists in providing a framework with which to make sense of the material. One definition of the term dialectic is as follows: "The existence or action of opposing social forces" (Sykes, 1976, p. 284). Inherent in a dialectic, then, is the presence of contrasting forces, each which may reveal the weaknesses of the other, with the end result being the solidification of one particular position or the creation of a co-existence or balance between two poles. Countless examples of contrasting, yet interdependent, forces can be found both in daily life and the world of the theatre. In society, the struggle between the forces of established tradition and dynamic change is timeless and universal. In work and other personal endeavors the desire for success is impacted to varying degrees by the possibility or fear of failure. Fantasy is counterbalanced by reality, truth by falsehood. In psychology, traits such as introversion and extroversion have been developed which define people by placing them somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes. A therapist attempts to counterbalance the existence of negative extremes in clients' lives, assisting them in discovering wholeness where there has been incompleteness, connectedness to others where there has been isolation, constructive living where actions have been personally destructive. In the global community the struggle between peace and confrontation has created polarization, at one extreme of which war is the only answer to resolving conflict, and at the other, war is never justified and peace must be promoted above all else. Theatre, in reflecting and representing the forces of life, mirrors the countless contrasting poles which exist and nowhere is the concept of a dialectic better exemplified than in the smiling and frowning faces of ancient masks of tragedy and comedy, usually represented intentionally side by side. The nature of a dialectic, then, involves contrasting poles, out of which may arise conflict. However, the cycling back and forth between extremes can also result in something which is learned, created, or synthesized. In using this concept of "contrasting poles", it is important to clarify that the process of the dialectic is not necessarily directed toward one pole winning out over the other but, instead, a modification or mutual adjustment of both may occur within the person involved, ultimately moving him or her toward an accommodation of important polarities and an ultimate experience of illumination and personal growth.
In this study, which explores the experiences of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played, two forces have come together, that of actor and character. These poles, while not necessarily in direct opposition, do involve the merging of the life context and unique personality of the actor, with the often contrasting life contexts and personalities of the characters being played, with the intention being that a final resolution be found in the form of a living, cohesive character to be performed on stage. In defining the overall Context of this dialectic there is the dramatic context involving the elements of the theatre including the character itself. The second context is that of the actor, who brings with him or her life experience and a personal history. These two contexts will be discussed, followed by an exploration of the Structure of this dialectic, that is, the actor's experience of the two poles of self and character including the merging process between actor and role which can occur. Following the description of the structure, the Dynamics of the Structure will focus on how the dialectic is accomplished including the elements and processes crucial to the formation of a character. The Outcome of the Process will focus on the impact playing certain characters has had on the actors. These experiences are divided into two sections, one concerning experiences of personal progression and the various ways in which the actors have been personally affected, and the second, reviewing experiences of life drama and the ways in which the characters played have combined with the historical context of the actors' lives. Finally, the Movement of the Whole will explore the culmination of the dialectic, the principles and central qualities of meaning as revealed by the actors interviewed.

At the end of each of these sections, the findings and insights will be related to the three drama-based therapies earlier reviewed, in order to extend the information gathered.
1. Context

**Dramatic Context**

Throughout the theatrical world in which present-day North American actors participate a number of elements are common. Theatre productions tend to be based on a written play. The play is a complex creation of the playwright, usually consisting of a script with acts, scenes, a plot, one or more characters, and stage directions. A play is a structure which generally has a beginning, middle, and end and often has a quality of heightened or condensed reality, with central themes and some form of conflict inherent in the action. The play is born out of the playwright's imagination and views of the world, and the quality and style of writing can make a great difference to the ease with which an actor is able to understand and portray the characters.

Once the actor has been cast in a role a series of relationships come into being which are central to the dramatic process. The actor must work with the director who ideally pulls the production into a unified and cohesive entity. The effectiveness of this relationship can be crucial to the successful execution of a character on stage. The director enters with his or her own opinions and theories of character development and the rehearsal process, and has an overall vision of the play itself.

Similarly, the actor will form relationships with the fellow players in the cast, also crucial to success as they must all work together and rely upon each other in creating what ultimately is an ensemble effort. An actor can perform in the same play numerous times but, with different casts each time, the experience and final product will vastly differ because of the people involved.

The actor must also develop a relationship with the character he or she will play, a relationship which will be focused on in great detail in this study. The actor, through the written play, gleans what information is available concerning the history, background, and personality of the character, and then builds the character through memorization of lines, character analysis, the rehearsal process, interaction with fellow players, and guidance from the director. Ultimately it is the successful portrayal of the character that is the actor's primary goal.

As the character, the actor will also come in contact with the other characters in the play. The successful execution of an actor's own character relies heavily on how successfully the relationships between characters have been developed.
The final, essential relationship is that between actor and audience. Without the audience the performance has little purpose, and the actor on stage is greatly impacted by the responses and reactions of the audience to his or her character. It is this ongoing interplay between actor and audience which is central to the dynamic, immediate and everchanging quality of a theatre production.

Another major element involved in the dramatic context can be called the "externals" of a production; these include the stage set, lighting, and makeup and costumes. Many actors draw heavily on the externals of the theatre in forming the internals of their characters. With costumes and makeup the actor can literally lose all recognizable aspects of themselves, thereby allowing the character to emerge. The lighting, set, and theatre space in general can transport actors and audience to different times and places, adding enormously to the actors' central efforts in creating the final result.

Two central components of the dramatic process are rehearsal and performance. It is during rehearsal that actors learn their parts, understand and investigate their characters through discussion and practice, learn blocking or movements on stage, receive guidance from the director, and develop relationships with the fellow actors. Rehearsal is the time to explore, learn, and solidify so that, ideally, the actors are ready to perform in front of an audience. Performance involves the presentation of the play on stage with the actors communicating and presenting the final result; this is the final synthesis of the playwright's vision, the director's interpretation, and the actor's creation.

Life Historical Context

To every character the actor brings his or her own life experience, world view, and personal context with which to endow the character with life and meaning. Numerous examples of life-historical context were evident in actors' statements and will be highlighted here to provide a sense of the centrality of an actor's life history and personal frame of reference in the creation of the character and the resulting impact of the character upon the actor.

In discussing characters which were especially memorable and meaningful for actors, some interviewees recall drawing upon experiences from their own lives, the memories of which were triggered or accessed through the character being played. In portraying a deeply troubled child where she, herself, had not experienced such difficulties, one actress concluded that she was able to capture the pain of this character as "...many's a time as a young girl I would hear Mummy share incidents of discovering that
children had been hurt by families...and it always went deep within me..." (Natalie). Acute observations as a child appear to be stored deep within the memory only to surface when the experience of playing a character strikes a familiar chord. In playing a dejected and angry character one actor concluded that "...maybe a lot of it drawed on my life experience of how I was brought up. It reminded me a lot of characters I had grown up with from the poor part of town I lived in..." (John).

Some actors indentify the way in which early life experiences were formative in actually shaping their relationship with the theatre. For one actress, the fantastical realm of acting became a way of avoiding a surrounding world which was difficult to face: "I was a shy child and a rather psychologically abused child...and so my way was to go somewhere else" (Kathy). For another actress early childhood experiences were no less potent in formulating the meaning theatre was to have for her: "There is a sense that the implications for me speaking up as a child were particularly confusing and dangerous" (Deborah); given this restrictive early experience it is interesting to note the central purpose theatre holds for her: "...I guess I do have a mission which is to say true things in public places...". For a third actress, acting is experienced on quite a higher plane of existence which she relates to her cultural background: "...I think the fact that I can talk about it (acting) as being spiritual is because I come from a Hindu background..." (Victoria).

Actors also relate other, more current life experiences which enter into the acting process once they are triggered by the character being played: "...she (the character) is so invested in the completeness of their life that she just can't see anything else. Well of course that was the person that I was in my first marriage" (Deborah). For another actress, a relationship in a play mirrored an important relationship she had with an older mentor figure in her own life: "...it (the play) really was about the story of (this mentor) and I, this younger person who understood an older person's art" (Jean).

Life experience which is concurrent with the playing of a role can also create an interesting mixture which either assists or debilitates the acting process. In discussing the prospect of a pregnant colleague playing a deeply destructive character, one actress was vehemently opposed to such an undertaking, believing that the life of the character and the life of the actor simply cannot be completely separated: "...she must not go through the experience of playing (that character) when she's pregnant...you would have to make contact with whatever you considered evil was" (Jean). Yet another actress struggled with
playing a particular character after experiencing a personal loss: "I really lost sight of where my character ended and I began...it may also have been the fact that my mother had just died and then you start thinking about your own life..." (Sarah). When actors' lives actually parallel characters' lives, the results can sometimes be satisfying: "I had a relationship that broke up...but that time it was very heavy and I was in a perfect play because it was really heavy..."(Victoria). However, actors' lives and characters' lives, when at odds with each other, can cause enormous struggle for the actor: "It's just really hard when it (the character) is going against what you're going through..."(Victoria). Such statements reinforce the unavoidable presence of the actor's own life context and how it influences the acting process.

When actors embark on the creation of characters they bring with them personal qualities which affect their ability to portray the character and the way in which they, as actors, will be personally affected by the process. In particular, actors, like anyone else, carry with them greater or lesser degrees of emotional health and feelings of well-being. Some actors interviewed note the impact of both the presence or lack of such qualities: "...you can tell the difference between the actor who has not dealt with their own demons...there's the actor where the audience cries and there's the actor where the actor cries"(Jean). Some actors believe personal difficulties can be used to an actor's advantage as emotion, experience, and knowledge to be drawn upon: "...actors are actors I think because, sometimes, of the problems and fears they have...they have sealed them off and they have become the pearls they use in their vocabulary"(Jean). Others believe fundamentally that emotional health is important to surviving in the acting profession and in portraying characters effectively: "...as actors we are allowed to release so much more and those of us who are healthy and do it in that way are very very healthy, and those of us who aren't are nuts"(Darlene).

The actors interviewed identified the interdependency between their own personal life context and the written character they must assume. In character development "...you have to find in your life fabric that person or you have to take from your memory..."(Jean). Later, this same actress concludes: "You use all your compassion, all your understanding, all your sensitivity and your knowledge of life everytime...". For another actress, playing characters often involves "...playing out critical elements of one's personality..."(Deborah). The life context therefore provides the material which the actor uses to bring the character to life. In exploring the impact of life-historical context on character development and the
resulting experiences of actors, this context also includes the theatre related experiences which the actor has accumulated. For some, their first exposure to theatre has lasting impact. As one actress recalls "...there was a play...which I had read as a romantic schoolgirl and I had fallen in love with this role"(Darlene). Later when she, in fact, played that role she reflects: "I had been waiting just to be this person that I had always wanted to be...". In the first play he had ever been involved in, another actor remembers being spellbound by a certain classic character and recalls the thrill of later playing that very character: "...I think it meant a lot to me, because it was part of my past... and as a kid I said to myself 'some day I'm going to play that part and that's why I'm here now...'"(John). Another actor, as a young child in his first Christmas concert in Sunday school, was told by his mother that it was most important that he make himself heard and, once finished his part, shouted out "Could you hear me Mom?" at which point the audience "broke up" and the child realized he could make people laugh (Sam). It is interesting to note that the same actor who relayed this recollection currently derives a great sense of enjoyment and purpose from performing comedy and sees theatre as a crucial form of communication, a way of being "heard" so to speak.

Each actor over time accumulates a repertoire of past characters they have played; in addition they have, in most cases, received formal training, learned various theories and techniques, and come in contact with other actors and directors who have affected their acting experiences. All of this, too, makes up part of the actor's unique life context which he or she brings to character development. In some unfortunate instances actors have actually felt that their experiences limited the amount of accumulated knowledge and insight they could have obtained: "I would say a lot of stuff I got to play enhanced the inadequacies or sense of things that weren't quite right with me..."(Kathy). Many more actors, however, describe the benefit of acting experiences from which material can be drawn for future use: "Experience accumulates and so you can play a really weird character and you suddenly remember that another time you played a character like this..."(Anthony). Another actor concurs: "I don't think any character ever leaves you...they're stored somewhere and when necessary they're reborn or recalled..."(Sam). One actress experiences the presence of past characters she has played as very pleasant company: "They're like old friends, it's like I've had the priviledge of having many friends, they just happen to be inside of me..."(Darlene).
Actors, then, bring to the acting experience a myriad of personal and professional experiences, memories, images, beliefs and perspectives; in short, they possess a unique world view and their own historical configuration of meaning. As one "pole" of the dialectic, the actor approaches the other "pole", the character, and engages in the creative process of bringing a character to life. The character portrayal ultimately benefits from both the context surrounding the character and the richness of what the actor brings from his or her own life.

Relevance of Context to Drama-Based Therapies

The context outlined, involving both the dramatic elements of the theatre and the life historical background of the actor, can be discussed in relation to the three drama-based therapies previously reviewed. In this way, similarities and differences can be observed; as well, possible elements from the actors' experiences may offer insights and have implications from the three therapies outlined, and for therapy in general.

Psychodrama

In considering Psychodrama and the dramatic or theatre context, unlike theatre no written play, script, or predetermined plot is the focus of this therapy. Instead, the story which, like theatre, has a beginning, middle, and end, is born out of the protagonist's experience rather than that of the often removed playwright. Protagonists in Psychodramas play themselves rather than a character created by others. The externals of the theatre such as lighting, costumes, makeup, and stage sets are not important to Psychodrama, however, the stage itself in both Psychodrama and theatre is crucial in establishing a space separate from everyday reality. The use of rehearsals in both offer opportunities from experimentation and preparation for performance. In theatre rehearsal and performance are both relegated to the stage, whereas in Psychodrama the protective space of the stage provides the opportunity for individuals to rehearse what they will then "perform" in real life. The presence of fellow players is important in both, though in Psychodrama group members are encouraged to be affected by and deeply involved in the dramas in which they participate. Audience members are seen as active players rather than spectators. The director is a strong and central figure in both Psychodrama and theatre and, in both, he or she plays a role in guiding and shaping the experiences of others. In both the director must be alert to the cues and offerings participants provide and ensure that the group is functioning effectively and
reaching goals appropriate to each. Strong similarities which Psychodrama shares with theatre involve the presence of condensed scenes, heightened reality, enactment, and immediate and dynamic experiences for those involved. Both represent life and relationships.

The presence of life historical context is much stronger in Psychodrama than in theatre. While actors bring elements of themselves to theatre in order to bring life to a character, in Psychodrama the personal experiences of the protagonists are everything and form the basis of the dramas. While personal issues, difficulties, or general well being can help or hinder the acting process, in Psychodrama such elements are the "stuff" that dramas are made of.

Drama Therapy

In Drama Therapy, unlike theatre, there is less emphasis on playing scripted characters or seeking out a play written by a separate playwright. However, Drama Therapy embraces numerous aspects found in the theatre realm. The use of puppets, masks, performance, story dramatization, improvisation, role playing, movement, simulation, pantomime, and props and costumes, are examples of the techniques borrowed from theatre in order to reach therapeutic goals. Any theatre approach which fosters self expression and group interaction is at the therapist's disposal. Similar to instructors or directors in theatre, drama therapists are expected to learn acting, directing, and theories of theatre as well as master the fundamentals of improvisation and performance. Similar to directors in rehearsal, drama therapists will choose techniques based on what will overcome impasses, reveal difficulties, and assist individuals in creating fully functioning characters. Both see the ability to represent a wide repertoire of roles as advantageous. In theatre and in Drama Therapy, the stage becomes a microcosm of life in which individuals have the freedom to experiment.

The presence of life historical context, as with Psychodrama, is more important in Drama Therapy than in theatre. While individuals do not necessarily recreate experiences and relationships from their own lives, the use of loosely structured dramatic techniques and exercises provide vehicles through which the self emerges. In order to participate in improvisations, individuals call upon memories, ideas, and images which have been determined by experiences, perceptions, past interactions and the current situation. Whatever is played out through theatre techniques has unique meaning for the individual. In both theatre and Drama Therapy personal difficulties and emotional well being will affect the success of
an interaction, characterization, or dramatic exercise. In theatre difficulties must be overcome or effectively utilized in order to create the characterization. In Drama Therapy personal difficulties become the focus and their alleviation the primary goal.

Fixed-Role Therapy

In Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) there is also, unlike theatre, less emphasis on playing a role created by a separate playwright or the enactment of a scripted play. However, unlike Psychodrama or Drama Therapy, clients do take on a character different from themselves. While it is the therapist and client who create this role, it is acceptable for contrasting elements to be present as opposed to Psychodrama and Drama Therapy in which the emphasis is on encouraging elements of the self to emerge and to be dealt with within the therapeutic setting. Similar to theatre, rehearsal and experimentation with the role take place but, in contrast, rehearsal only involves the client and therapist rather than a group, and after rehearsal the client experiments with the role in real life and with people significant to him or her. No stage as such is emphasized in FRT though initial rehearsal and experimentation in a safe environment are important. The therapist's role is to provide experiences and opportunities for experimentation for the client and he or she is expected to explore his or her own creativity and be willing to play roles with the client. While these qualities may exist for a director in theatre and might actually be indications of an effective and creative director, usually the director is facilitating interactions among actors and attempting to remain true to the intentions of the playwright.

The initial step in FRT, unlike in theatre, involves assessing the client's own life historical context. It is from this assessment that the new role sketch will emerge. It is interesting that George Kelly suggests that clients write their initial character sketches as if they were a principal character in a play. In theatre, individuals are often chosen because they have qualities or are the "type" thought to effectively play a certain character and the character is rarely born out of or tailored to their own experience as it is in FRT. In both theatre and FRT is the individual is discouraged from completely "becoming" the character. At the end of the enactment period the individual is encouraged to abandon the role. While Drama Therapy most utilizes theatre techniques, FRT most parallels performance theatre as both involve individuals rehearsing and enacting characters different than themselves.
2. Structure

The central dialectic which emerges from this study is that between the character and actor. This is supported by frequent statements made by the actors interviewed regarding the personal experiences of forming and playing characters. Actors, for instance, struggle with how much use to make of their own emotional lives as opposed to how much to focus on the personality of the character as given in the written play; how much emotional distance from the character is important versus how much to allow the character to "take over" the actor in order for the character to be played most truthfully. Within this dialectical structure some actors then describe a merging process which evolves out of the cycling or struggling between the two dialectical poles of actor and character. This analysis section focuses on the structure of the dialectic, that is, the actor's experience of the two poles of self and character, including the merging process which can occur.

Forming the Character

The Actor or Pole #1

The actors interviewed described experiences of bringing forth or finding what was needed for the character from within themselves. Whether identified as using emotional memory, drawing on past experiences, or expanding on fragments of their inner lives to fill the role, the actors' statements focus on what is coming from within themselves to bring the character to life. As a child John remembers watching a great classic character on stage, vowing that he would someday play that role and knowing that he would have what was needed from within: "...I know that for that part there's something in me and it's not there yet but it will be". In playing a character of extreme violence which was vastly different from his own personality, Anthony also knew he could find within himself what was needed: "...there were things that I knew that I had inside that I could enlarge or expand on that would give me him". In playing a character who faces the loss of her career as an artist, Kathy was easily able to draw from her own understanding to play this kindred character: "...it was almost like a personal expression of what I really feel about myself and my work...". For Deborah, a recent real life experience of being involved in union negotiations gave her new material with which to approach a character of power and authority: "The practice of high status and getting what you want and drawing lines is very close to me right now...I may have a fresh perspective".
On a general level, actors describe the ongoing process of reaching deep within themselves each time they approach the playing of a character: "You use all your compassion, all your understanding, all your sensitivity and your knowledge of life every time..." (Jean). At times this process takes on the form of an exhaustive search: "...in rehearsal when you are digging inside yourself for all the stuff you need, you go through everything you know about it. Your total being on some days can be going through, searching through all this material in order to find the exact moment...and in doing that you use your own knowledge and your own imagination and your own life..." (Jean).

Often it seems that the material which the actor is searching for lies in the emotional realm; in finding what is necessary to create the character, actors find emotional connections from within themselves. Natalie exemplifies this process in her use of emotional pain, an emotion she is able to easily access: "I have this ability and this sensibility of being able to see other people's pain...". In playing a character who is deeply unhappy within a marriage, Natalie does not see any initial similarity to herself. However, she discovered she was able to find the key to giving life to this character through finding a deeper emotional link: "... the connection for me is pain...I think everybody knows, I do for sure, what is feels like inside my heart, inside my guts, and inside my head to be sad and to be hurt in a way that you almost can't articulate...". In linking with a character Natalie describes searching for the "pink spot" of the character, that is, the area of pain or vulnerability similar to the sensitive, vulnerable, pink underbelly of an animal. In describing her own "pink spot" as not being "beautiful enough", Natalie finds it very easy to play a particular character which connects with this area of vulnerability: "...that (character) for me is easy...all the emotions that you have to tap into, really that's about remembering what it's like to not be noticed, to feel that you're not as good as anybody else, that you're not beautiful enough, that you aren't bright enough, that you aren't rich enough...". Other actors similarly observe the necessity of tapping into their own emotional reservoirs and finding an inner link to the character: "I don't know what degrees to which people experience self hatred but I suspect we've all experienced it, so you just have bring what you know to it" (Sarah). Victoria similarly states: "...I have had emotions of extremes and confusion and those outside-of-yourself emotions that would lead a person to commit that act and I can tap into those emotions without having to do the act myself...". This process of emotionally connecting with the role, however, does not require the actor to wallow in his or her own emotions but to access only
what is necessary to create the life of the character: "...you don't stay in this morass of agony or grief or jealousy or whatever, you just touch it, and you touch it only as you need it..."(Jean). At times, it appears that the portrayal of some characters, such as those created by the playwright, Shakespeare, does require actors to tap extensively into their emotional lives and experiences: "...today such a demand is put on you to make it absolutely real and recognizable in a deep inner way...that to fill the hugeness and size of any Shakespeare you would have to draw on more of whatever was required than you would need if you needed to express emotions during the day..."(Jean).

What actors know and have experienced, then, become the substance and material they bring to the characters. Pain and personal difficulties for some are used advantageously in providing the means through which links with characters are made: "Actors are actors I think because, sometimes, of the problems and fears the have; they have perhaps sealed them off and they have become the pearls they use in their vocabulary, the beads that they tell in order to find the moment..."(Jean).

Actors also, though less often, describe instances in which they are unable or experience difficulty in finding the means within themselves to bring forth what is called for by the character. John has little difficulty in acknowledging instances in which he has not been suited to a role: "...you can have a well written role that's simply not you. I will never play Romeo". He later, similarly, states: "Sometimes you should just let it (the character) pass and let someone else do it". In other instances actors experience the exhilaration of finding they have elements within themselves that they initially have thought were absent. To Natalie, playing a character of enormous power and status was out of her range as to her "...that means she (the character) has be beautiful, she has to be tall and slim and beautiful...". She was, however, suprised to hear her director disputing her assumptions in saying to her "...don't be silly, you are her...you are right for this role". Natalie recalls hearing his words "...with ears that I've never had before...". Thus Natalie went on to play this powerful character, discovering she did, in fact, have the qualities necessary. Sadly, there are instances when the potential exists for an actor to access inner material but this potential fails to be realized: "...I looked at that part and I thought I can play this, this, and this of her but of course all that sexuality and sensuality, I can't do that, I don't know how to do that, that's not me...and the sad thing is that I probably did" (Kathy).
It is apparent that, in the process of creating a vital, living character, actors draw upon their own emotions, experiences, and inner selves in finding what is required for the character. Actors themselves generally seem to know when they have what is called for: "...at certain times you come in contact with a character and you just know, you are that character" (John). As well, actors know that what is unique about a performance is what the actor uniquely brings to it: "...anyone can do what I do, they just can't play a part the way I play it" (John).

The Character or Pole #2

While actors describe the process of searching within themselves for the material needed to create a character, conversely they also identify the necessity of "entering into" the world of the character, to experience and understand the character's life, background, thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the world in order to bring that character to life with truth and integrity.

In describing the first role he played which was especially memorable, Sam remembers transforming his young body into that of an old and debilitated man: "...it's probably the first time where I was really conscious of getting inside a character". In contemplating the possibility of a pregnant colleague playing a truly disturbed and destructive character, Jean strongly believed this fellow actress should refuse such an undertaking as she could not effectively play the role without entering into the dark and tormented world of the character, thereby bringing negative elements to her own life and possibly to that of her unborn child: "...she must not go through the experience of playing (that character) when she's pregnant...you would have to make contact with whatever you considered evil was...". While rehearsing a part which was radically different in nature from herself, Darlene explored a lot of "new territory", trying to discover how she could convincingly carry out actions foreign to her and verbalize words and statements which she found distasteful. In the end she had to enter into the world of the character and "...make some kind of mental adjustment so (she) could accept this". She finally "...got totally behind it and did it with as much power as (she) could...", but in doing so concluded: "...you have to get around doing things that make demands on you that go against your own personal values". For Darlene, then, the world of the character, though vastly different from her own, needed to be completely understood and accepted even if it meant offending some of her own personal values or causing her to experience some initial discomfort. For Jean, portraying a character dying of cancer demanded the utmost of truth and
reality. To be true to such a powerful and moving figure Jean had to fully and completely experience this character's life: "...if I was not `dying', if this lady was not really facing death every night then the play didn't work, I couldn't just pretend...the fact was that I had to face this". Later she continues, describing the totality of the experience: "Now this was not me, but I had to call on myself to face the things she faced and, in understanding her life, I had to understand art and I had to understand her fears, and I had to live through them every night". For Jean, a key to bringing a character to life is to understand and live the character's inner world. In portraying yet another character, this time one of intimidating fame and power, Jean questioned her own ability to fill the enormous depth and greatness required. It was not until she began examining the life of the character that she found the key to playing it: "...what she (the character) does in the play is she lives pieces of her life and parts she has played, in order to what?...and I decided that it was in order to prove that (she) existed at all...". Once a link of understanding was established and the inner life of the role revealed, the character became accessible and was within Jean's grasp. Sam similarly emphasizes the importance of comprehending the inner nature of a character: "Learning the part means learning the lines and it also means understanding the role to such an extent that you know what the character is going to do and say".

The process of character development, therefore, involves the two poles of a dialectic - the life of the actor and the world of the character. Not surprisingly actors comment most upon the ways in which these two poles come together.

Merging the Poles

The nature of a dialectic includes not only the cycling between two opposing poles but the emergence of ways in which these forces merge or co-exist. In addition to describing experiences of "drawing upon" material within themselves as well as "entering into" the world of the character, actors invariably relate ways in which they find common ground with the character, and experiences in which they, as actors, and the characters come together to form a somewhat balanced and cohesive union. The actors' experiences suggest that there exists a "coming together" of actor and character, an examination of similarities and differences between actor and character, and ways found which create a bridge between the two poles.

Actors interviewed described instances in which they could identify and find commonalities with the characters. John simply states that in one instance: "...there was something of (the character) in me".
Sarah also describes an instance in which she could relate to the character: "...(the character) complains and doesn't know where her ideas and tastes come from and I feel that way". For Natalie "...the first thing (she) always look(s) for is the pink spot in any character...", this involves finding the vulnerable part of the character which she can relate to or as she describes it, "...the thing we're most frightened of or the thing we're most fearful of exposing". Kathy, too, looks for commonalities, describing this in a somewhat different style: "...I have a 'hot' sort of thing happen, there's an emotional response for me...". She later adds: "...when I have read a part I have always looked at it in terms of me, that I would know whether I could play it really well if there is that kind of shock of recognition...". In a specific example she describes relating to a character who was facing the loss of her career as an artist: "...I don't think she (the character) ever came to terms with it and as an artist I can understand...". Continuing in a similar vein, Kathy outlines generally the ways in which she connected with her characters in the past: "Certainly when I was in my twenties I knew that I could play (the characters of) Tennessee Williams, those women were very much what I was about. They had a quality of frailty or whatever, there's certainly something that runs through them". For Natalie, the way in which she discovers connections with characters was exemplified in her portrayal of an eccentric village character: "...I've always been attracted to anything that is different, by virtue of the courage that it takes to be different, and she was the person that everybody laughed at behind her back...but she knew, so I mean there's all sorts of parallels there between (myself) and (the character)...". For Darlene, the enjoyment of connecting with the character of a bright young girl emanated from a desire to connect with corresponding aspects of herself: "I had been waiting just to be this person that I had always wanted to be...there was a lot of familiar stuff that was close to me and that I wanted to be close to me and I liked her spirit and her courage and I wanted to be that courageous...".

While these comments identify ways in which actors personally relate to characters or find qualities in common, actors also refer to the fact that connections take place due to the universality of characters' emotions or experiences. As Sarah comments..."It's like how many themes are there? Most characters are dealing with some kind of escape, most of us are trying to get out of something, so the themes become very familiar...". For John, a memorable character came out of a play "...about love and forgiveness and that's something we can all relate to". In later describing a "tremendous, boisterous character, with
beautiful poetry and prose...", John suggests that this character "...exists in every person, there's nothing sadder than unrequited love, we've all been there...".

For some actors, connections between themselves and the characters are made through comparison and contrast: "...you participate in their lives and you use the magic ‘if’ - if that had happened to me what would I have done - so you examine almost scientifically the difference between what your reaction would have been and theirs..." (Jean). Similarly, Victoria describes that "...it's like, for example, looking at a character and saying (she) reacted in that situation that way in the script and you think, how would I do that...". For John, satisfaction comes from simultaneously experiencing both the similarities and differences between he and the characters: "...I think in everything I do there is something that is a part of me and something that's far away from me...I don't want to do a character that is really easy for me or it's boring".

Whether an actor connects with a character through personal similarities, universal human experiences, or a comparison/contrast process, one result seems to be the forming of a bond which holds special importance to the actors. These actors often described feelings of respect, caring, compassion, and even possessiveness toward their characters: "...(I) have a great respect and compassion for them...I love my characters...I have a great respect and great regard and great empathy for all these people..." (Natalie). For Darlene, the character almost becomes something akin to family: "...I had an opportunity to live with (this character) for several months and I really respect her, and it's funny because I've seen this character performed by other people and there's this tiny little sense of - I'm possessive of her...It's like watching somebody else dress your child in the wrong clothes...". Natalie concurs with this feeling of possessiveness: "You take possession of that character and you become territorial...". While the feelings actors have toward their characters might be similar to feelings they would have toward separate, living persons, as one actor identifies, the emotions actors experience towards characters are ironically directed towards to themselves, as it is, in fact, the actors who bring life to the characters: "...if I disliked or was indifferent to (the character), then I would actually be disliking or being indifferent to something about me..." (Natalie).

Given that the nature of character development appears to involve actors using material from their innermost selves, as well as entering fully into the lives of the characters being played, it is perhaps not
suprising that actors think carefully about what roles they feel willing and prepared to portray. Jean refers to the development of a character as a journey, and one that is not to be undertaken lightly; "...I choose my parts more and more carefully because it costs me more everytime to go this journey...". From experience she has discovered the cost of playing some characters which have required that she get in touch with painful emotions within herself: "...I was so deeply bruised inside dragging up the stuff to play the character". In refusing to play a particularly fascinating but destructive character, Jean reflected: "...my soul just could not bear learning all those lines...you learn them by attaching them to yourself in a meaningful way and I couldn't do it". As a result of many years of experience Jean concludes: "I have to look carefully at the journey I have to take, at what I have to give life to". John, too, recommends cautiousness regarding the characters an actor chooses to explore: "...if you want to go into that territory, that's the thing you have to think of, maybe you don't want to go into that type of territory, maybe (for instance) I don't want to play a child molester...".

In some of the most striking and vivid comments, actors describe the coming together of both the character and themselves as actors. For Jean, the process can involve an initial connection to herself, followed by an exploration of the foreign territory introduced to her by the character: "...once I found that bridge to myself then I was able to do it in some terms and I could be exotic and glamorous and even beautiful in those terms, while I don't consider myself to be any of those things". Anthony captures the twofold nature of the character development process: "Basically you're playing yourself, you have to bring what's inside of you that might have something in common with the character and you have to find a way to feel the things that the character must be feeling". Concurring with this, though framing it somewhat differently, Natalie describes her characters as: "...something that I have found from inside and then applied stuff on top as well, it's a twofold process...". Jean, in her image of "the journey", eloquently describes a "crossing over" process in which actor and character merge together: "...you start with generalities and, as Stanislavski said, generality is the enemy of art... so you might start with a great generality of grief and in the end you have to do it for the character's reasons not your own. You might have to harness it from your own life or open up that part but in the end you cross over...and the character behaves the way it has to behave". The rewards and feelings of satisfaction when this merging of actor and character takes place can be powerful: "...there are nights when the play takes over and the
character takes over called 'the nights when the God is with you', when you can't take a step wrong, you can't take a breath wrong, and it's almost as if you really have crossed over into this imaginary life and this is quite astonishing when this happens" (Jean).

For Kathy, the coming together of character and actor as balanced and merging forces has been a long personal and professional journey. In her early acting years she describes the ease with which she entered the world of the character: "I'd always worked in a slightly different way which was to create a circumstance out of the life of the character as I understood it from the play". However, she experienced difficulty in drawing material from within herself. While working strictly from the written character, with the assistance of her imagination, offered a heady and exciting experience, Kathy, in essence, left her own personal experience and very "self" behind, an imbalance which she encountered in a particular performance in which the character she was playing failed to materialize: "...when it was scary was the night when suddenly it eluded me and there I was left with me and I didn't know what to do...". In making sense of the situation and beginning to seek a better balance Kathy concluded: "I seem to have relied on my imagination more than my actual being...I think what's switching now is that I'm starting to work more out of what's actually happening to me...". Following this significant discovery Kathy experienced the satisfaction of effectively merging both self and character in her portrayal of a deeply moving and powerful classic character. In seeking the required depth of emotion Kathy recalls: "...I had that depth of anger and rage and grief, I had all those things...there's still part of the imagination that is still very powerful for me and is very important but I would say it's coming closer to whoever I am and drawing on me, and not something I create in my imagination and not something that specifically happened to me but simply that I am in grief or I am in rage". With the character more anchored within herself, Kathy feared less that the character would suddenly elude her and discovered with pleasant surprise that she had a wealth of emotion and experience within herself upon which to draw: "I couldn't believe the anger that came out of me, I know it was there, I'd read it in the script, but it burst out in a way that I'd never experienced before, and I thought, where did that come from? Well of course it come from me and then it was always there".

Kathy's experiences and the comments of the other actors interviewed seem to emphasize the important merging process between actor and character, that while the two contrasting poles exist and
cannot always be in perfect balance, both must co-exist and come together to create a fully formed, fully alive character portrayal. Often this delicate balance and elusive relationship is difficult even for actors to define: "The (characters) are three dimensional persons, and yet at the same time they're me, ya, it's kind of weird" (Natalie).

Performing the Character

In outlining the structure of the dialectic, thus far the experiences explored have centered mainly on the process of developing the character, whether it involves drawing upon oneself as the actor, entering into the world of the character, or seeking a union of the two. Actors also focus on the actual "doing" of the character and the varied, complex ways in which actor and character co-exist together. A central challenge which emerges in the definition of this co-existence is how the actor finds a balance between becoming the character and maintaining his or her own separate identity. The task becomes one of defining the level of intimacy and separation between actor and character as they live together over time. At one extreme lies the elements of separation, distance, ego, and control which actors experience and, in some cases, argue as essential to the acting process. At the other extreme lies the dissolving of boundaries into intimate relationships between actor and character. The actors convey this latter extreme through three types of experiences: becoming "possessed by the character, identifying closely with the character due to parallel life experiences, and using themselves as actors extensively or even exclusively in playing a character. It is important to emphasize here that neither end of the spectrum is being viewed as better or worse than the other, each simply represent both poles and each is centrally linked and essential to the other.

Experiences of Separation:

Separation between actor and character

Actors emphasize the necessity of a separation between themselves as actors and the characters they play, a separation of which they themselves must remain continually aware: "...there is a separation, it's because the reality that has to exist for me, and fortunately, is that they are not me, they are definitely a part of me..."(Natalie). Jean, in playing a powerful character dying of cancer, also clearly states: "Now this was not me, but I had to call on myself to face the things she (the character) faced...although it was a great and joyous experience, it called on everything I knew as an actor, all the discipline I had, to keep it
only within the play and not let it flood through the rest of me...". In this statement Jean identifies the risk of becoming so involved in the experiencing of a character's life that the identity of the actor can be threatened, thereby making it essential that the actor maintain a strong sense of separateness and distance, while at the same time sufficiently experiencing the character's world in order to represent the role truthfully. Sam further defines this process: "The actor becomes the character and they go through everything the character goes through. At the same time the actor is being the character there is a sense of transformation in the sense of knowing that you are separate from the character, that you have a body and mind that are doing these things in order to achieve certain emotional levels and connections with the audience". This concept of separation can prove to be advantageous to actors as they can freely experiment and challenge the confines of "appropriate" behaviour within the safety of the character with the knowledge that the character is not really them: "...I would certainly never behave the way she (the character) behaves, the things she says, the stuff she does, because that's not who I am, but since it's not me I could take it really far" (Victoria). In maintaining a sense of distance, Sam is helped by conceptualizing characters as having an existence as real as his own: "All these roles...they're all meaningful to me and I think I was probably meaningful to them, cause I believe it's fair to say they all have an existence of their own".

Some actors relate having an awareness of their own separateness while onstage playing characters: "...I am one of those who is always able to separate himself from what he is doing, to watch himself on stage and in a sense direct himself..."(Sam). This same actor describes the presence of three "figures" in the acting process: the actor, character, and observer who are all present within the body of one person. It is the observer who figuratively "stands back" to watch the actor in progress, and who monitors, adjusts, and directs the action. Sam also describes these three figures as child, parent and adult: "...the character in theatre in a sense is the child...the actor is the parent...the third level is the adult making decisions about what the parent and child have to do". Natalie also identifies with this ability to observe from a distance while on stage: "...although I'm an actor and I'm doing my acting trip, there's a part of my brain that is going...ah, that's really well constructed from a psychological point of view...". The experience of feeling separate from the character while on stage, however, does not necessarily demand cool, uninvolved, detachment; in fact, in some cases it involves a near spiritual experience in which the
actor transcends the bounds of the character. Darlene describes just such an experience in which her separateness from a character was a deeply powerful experience: "...I was in the balcony, I wasn't onstage and I was watching myself do this part...it was the best, the most, it was an amazing creative experience, a breakthrough, almost a religious experience in that there was the loss of this need to control...there was just this separation and enormous affection for this person onstage...I've heard other actors describe the same thing, that the finest work they ever did was when they weren't doing it, when it was like it was out of body".

Though different in nature, it is clear that some actors have the ability to distance and separate themselves from their characters, and they, in fact, emphasize the importance of this ability. Rather than diminishing the believability of the character, for some it becomes a way in which they monitor the effectiveness and quality of their performance, and even experience a sense of transcendence.

Separation between "real" and "stage" life

Some actors also emphasize the importance of establishing a separation between one's personal life and the world of the stage: "...there's life and there's acting and those are two separate things all together...I don't think I've ever brought my personal problems onstage in anything I've ever done and I'm proud of that" (John). This same actor recalls a scene in a play in which he felt a fellow player took reality too far: "I felt she had crossed the line and it wasn't acting anymore". He, himself, had to admit that, at times, controlling one's personal reactions can be difficult, as he discovered through being slapped night after night in performance: "...it's a strange thing cause in the play in these slapping scenes, no matter who you are as an actor you feel strange about that, slapping is a really demeaning thing, and every night". Despite this admission however, he still holds to the general premise: "I don't want to bring my life to the stage". For Darlene, once she has played a character it becomes an entity separate from her own life: "...it's funny because I don't see the characters I play as me, I always talk about them as 'her' or 'she', even when I'm watching myself on TV I'm totally dissociated".

Four of the actors interviewed go so far as to equate the ability to separate personal and professional life with emotional health, suggesting that giving too much of one's own self or entering too deeply into the world of the character are sacrifices beyond what should normally be expected of an actor, and can actually threaten the actor's well-being. As Darlene explains: "You shouldn't be hurting yourself in the
process of doing a character". As an example she then relates an experience in which she was to smash a rag doll to the floor as a character and a colleague suggested that she imagine that it was her own child: "...it wasn't good for me because it was a shattering image, because I can take that into my work and I don't believe anyone need sacrifice their sanity for (their work)". After playing a character which affected her in an extremely personal manner Victoria reflects: "...I hope I never go into an extreme like that again for a role, only because I love what I do and if it's going to cause that kind of strife then that's not positive...". Sam concludes that: "it's important to reveal certain aspects of yourself as long as it's important or relevant. All you owe an audience is a good performance, not necessarily your personal life". Jean also concludes the importance of protecting one's personal well-being with the following: "It is very unhealthy when actors completely become characters and totally lose themselves. Finding the truth of the character does not mean living the character as a reality, one must be separate".

Whether it is separating oneself onstage from the character or keeping clear boundaries between one's personal and professional lives, some actors clearly emphasize the importance such qualities play in enabling them to both effectively portray characters and maintain their own emotional health.

Experiences of Non-Distinction:

Opposite to the experiences of separateness just described are instances in which actors describe little or no distance between themselves and the characters being performed. These can be divided into three types of experiences: 1. those in which personal life events and issues within the actor's life parallel those of the character; 2. those in which the actor plays a character in which they are extensively or completely playing themselves; 3. and those in which the actor feels taken over or "possessed" by the character.

Parallel Experiences

The extent to which a character is easy or difficult to portray, for some actors, depends on the personal experiences that are currently taking place in their own lives: "...what's going on in your personal life affects things ...there was no levity in my life at all and here I was in this comedy...It's just really hard when it (the play) is going against what you're going through..."(Victoria). Sarah found herself strongly affected by a role and attributed this to personal factors: "...I really lost sight of where my character ended and where I began...it may also have been the fact that my mother had just died and then you start
thinking about your own life...". Deborah found herself in the unique position of feeling that the lead-up to her decision to do a role actually paralleled the character she was to play: "...(the) character is a woman where the family focus is always on everybody else and she never has a place in the sun...Well that's precisely what's happening around this play...". She later adds: "...I'm not getting any enthusiasm or support around going away to do this next play. That's also exactly what's in the script with (this character)...". It is the parallel between Deborah and this character which actually assisted her in deciding to do the role: "...the preamble to getting to do that play is exactly the same thing, we're having the play right now in fact. I've decided to do it". The words which finally secured her decision came from a close friend and colleague who told Darlene: "...fight for yourself like that character's fighting for herself...".

Parallel experiences appear to involve not only current life events or issues but also ones which have been present in an actor's life for some time, even a life time: "...I really started exploring stuff in my own life that came into the part...Now I know that your life and your work sometimes go along at the same time and that was certainly happening that time" (Kathy). This same actress, in playing a different role, adds: "...(the character) goes into a profound depression, which actually I suppose mirrors a bit of my own experience...". For Jean, two characters in a very memorable play paralleled her own relationship with an older mentor figure: "...it really was the story of (this mentor) and I, this younger person who understood this older person's art". Jean also describes the difficulty in working with a young actress who clearly was relating so personally to her character that she was unable to function: "She had to go this journey until she was really my daughter and she could attack me...Well for a week because she had to sort through all this she got so frightened that she had hysterics and would suddenly run out of rehearsal, hyperventilating". For Sam, playing a violent and disturbed character paralleled a past he thought he had left behind: "It reminded me a lot of characters I had grown up with from the poor part of town I lived in...it was like a time capsule in a way, and going back and portraying that as effectively as you can possibly brought back memories, it was an extremely depressing play at times".

Of all the actors interviewed Deborah describes the most profound instance of a character paralleling the personal life of the actor. In Deborah's case playing a role, in which she is initially naive and then wise to her husband's infidelity, directly mirrored Deborah's own real life experiences: "...she (the
character) is so invested in the completeness of their life that she just can't see anything else. Well of course that was the person I was in my first marriage". This uncanny similarity impacted on her to such an extent that during rehearsals she experienced distressing physical symptoms: "...I would recognize that I wasn't breathing. Also my right ear drum was fibrillating...". During actual moments of the play itself Deborah would find herself transported back to almost identical scenes from her own past: "When (onstage) I move towards (the 'other woman') and I see her tense with fear that's the part at which I would start to check out. I have actually had experiences like that with (my husband)". Hardest of all was returning to a naive and unknowing state: "...I had to be absolutely innocent like I didn't know what was going on...For me to get to a point where I could lie to myself again...it was the hardest thing I've ever done". The terrible moment of "discovery" also brought back painful personal memories: "...the discovery's very painful. When the scene continued I struggled with the tears and that was very real every single night". It took all that Deborah had within her to overcome the overwhelming personal identification and be able to portray the character night after night.

To greater and lesser degrees, then, actors find themselves, often unwittingly, playing characters in which events, emotions, and issues parallel their own lives; this is possibly an unavoidable occupational hazard as actors use the "stuff" of their inner lives to bring life to the characters they play.

Actors Playing Themselves

In some instances actors describe experiencing a strong sense of themselves onstage. This may involve only brief moments or more extreme occasions where the entire character is based on the personality of the actor. Brief moments on stage seem to involve actors becoming aware that they have briefly "left" the character and are conscious that it is actually themselves, as individuals, who are on stage. Natalie describes one such moment: "it's me on that rock in that moment. It's not (the character). They (the audience) see it as (the character) but it's me because it takes me so strongly every night". However, experiences which have most strongly impacted actors involve instances in which they have had to extensively "be themselves" in a role and, in one unusual instance, actually play a character based on their own life. Darlene recalls being cast in a role because the director wanted her to actually be herself within the role: "...he knew I was the person he wanted this character to be. I'm a character woman...but character women are terrified of playing themselves. So, to get me to that he really did an amazing
number...he completely stripped me of every piece of artifice...". Darlene went through an exhilarating
and terrifying experience of not being allowed to speak her lines unless they came from her "soul" as,
according to Darlene, "...he wanted to get my rhythms, my real thoughts". With the director continually
pushing her to be herself within the role, Darlene recalls going through "...this process where everything
was broken down to such an extent that I didn't know anymore what I was doing, so I had to trust, I had
to just let go; rather than me being the keeper of the character I didn't know who the character was, she
was just me". Fortunately Darlene had the ability, and the director was sufficiently competent, to ensure
that the performance succeeded and the final result was a tremendous, albeit risky, experience for
Darlene. For others, the experience of heavily using one's own "self", with the vulnerability and emotional
exposure which that entails, has not been such a positive experience. As Darlene herself acknowledges:
"...I've watched people go over the edge and there's no-one there to catch them and some of them don't
come back. That happened in (a play) - an actress who played a psychiatrist had just been involved in a
very heavy workshop which involved emotional memory and she was trying to use that in the play...I
feared for her sanity". Kathy also attests to the vulnerability of being "oneself" onstage when a character
she played, which had been solely based on imagination and not sufficiently secured within her own
experience, failed to materialize during a performance: "...when it was scary was the night when suddenly
it eluded me and there I was left with just me and I didn't know what to do".

Probably the most extreme example of "playing oneself" onstage is relayed by Victoria, who
performed in a play based on her own life experience. With the play written by a friend who knew her
well, there was little separation between the play and Victoria's own life: "...that was the most difficult
show I've ever done because it was about me...there were these three personalities and they were all facets
of me, and that just turned my head inside out, it was like therapy, I didn't know how to play them
because they were all me". With the traditional separation between actor and character lacking, there
seemed little opportunity for Victoria to be able to distance herself from the experience: "I couldn't see
how to play the characters and I went though hell trying to find the connection". Two factors made the
experience particularly difficult; first, the play brought up a number of personal issues which Victoria
had never personally resolved for herself, therefore she experienced extensive emotional distress while
attempting to portray the very character causing her personal difficulties; secondly, the reality of playing
herself onstage in front of an audience was a frightening proposition: "To go up onstage and talk to the audience as yourself is terrifying. If you can go up onstage and talk to the audience with the facade of some other character, even if it's just the name of someone else, it makes you think you're safe. As soon as you think it's you you're so vulnerable, you're totally exposed, you feel naked...". Luckily, with help of a competent director, she was able to overcome her difficulties and successfully perform the production.

While using one's emotional inner self to some extent seems to be expected when forming and performing a character, using or playing oneself in the extreme does not appear to be as desirable to most actors; rather, relying upon the character seems to offer some form of protection from the vulnerability of revealing one's innermost self in public. As Victoria discovered after her ordeal: "After that play I got to go and play a character in a normal sort of situation and it was a piece of cake".

"Possession" Experiences

Actors describe various ways in which characters have dominated or "taken over" their lives, evoked aspects of themselves which could not be dismissed even once the play was completed, provided a form of protection from elements of real life, and created transformational experiences in which the actors have been physically no longer recognizable.

For Kathy, in the early stages of her career she played most of her characters without anchoring them firmly within her own experience. Instead she entered into the imaginative world of the character completely, allowing it to take over her own world: "...when I played (a character) years and years ago, my sister said I was like that for six months afterwards...". Later she adds: "...there was this overlap where they (the characters) would come in and take over - but at the same time it was an imaginative thing... I'd do a rehearsal and I wouldn't remember and it was as though whoever this person or character was stepped in and there is something about that, about stepping aside and saying OK and giving yourself over to it". Similarly, Victoria describes a recurring experience of feeling each character invade and take over her life: "Every role I've played, though I never intend for it to hurt me or affect or take over my personal life, it does...the intensity of this depends on the intensity of the role... there are roles that I've done where there's no way I can separate". Victoria explains further: "...I feel all hell breaks loose and I have become this character in the most neurotic sense of it and I take it home with me and I can't eat, sleep, anything other than the character". Explaining this phenomenon as a necessary part of creating a
truthful role Victoria continues: "...you also have to manufacture a whole history for this little human being...you have to do all the background stuff the audience may never see, you have to do it for yourself. And when it becomes so complete like that you all of a sudden are this human being". Victoria qualifies the experience as being largely internal where the identity of the character seeps into her own personality: "That's not to say that if I was playing a woman with a limp and an accent that I'd walk around with a limp and accent, but I would certainly walk around with all her philosophies and values and morals and I would have all of those in my body and personality for that duration, it just tends to bleed in". In recalling the emotional intensity of one character, Victoria conveys the way in which characters invade or possess her psyche in describing the emotional intensity of playing a young girl who is gang raped: "...something just burst inside of me and I let it rip, the emotion just came pouring and pouring out...I knew I wasn't really being gang raped but you still have all these sensory reactions...and if you're really and truly trying to be integral in the character you're going to allow any feeling to surface that's going to come up...". Victoria is not the only one who notices when characters infiltrate her personality. In playing an extraverted, successful, "high-flying" type of character, Victoria remembers when the character began to take over: "...I was at this party and this friend of mine said to me '(Victoria) you're different' and I know that that's what it was". Natalie also recalls a particularly haunting and heart-wrenching character in which she found it most difficult to prevent the character from remaining with her constantly: "I knew that (this character) was going to be with me night and day. I couldn't turn her off...hers was a voice that needed to be heard loudly...and in order to do that justice I had to take her with me everywhere".

With the force that some characters are able to exert over the lives of actors, it is not surprising that actors sometimes experience an altering of reality which results in subsequent real life consequences. For Sam: "When you click on an emotional thing it's not like a machine you know...sometimes as an actor you press certain buttons to get an effect, to take you some place and then sometimes we do it to ourselves...". As Darlene explains, the altering of reality can be as a result of the actor strongly connecting with the character: "...it's hard not to make an identification...you create it as sure as you create the part you're playing...people do take advantage of that or they get lost in it or they get screwed up around it". As evidence of this phenomenon Darlene adds: "It's one reason women marry the men they work with
because they start to believe what's happening...you get hooked into the illusion of reality that isn't really there". Jean concurs with this analysis, citing similar examples: "...a lot of people who played Romeo and Juliet opposite one another ended up marrying for short or long periods of time, because this playwright goes so deeply, evokes that piece of yourself so deeply...".

While characters seem, in some instances, to "take over" the actors' personalities, a few actors welcome the experience of having a character become a major presence in their lives, either as a means to safely interact with the public or as a way of being someone other than themselves in the world. Darlene briefly alludes to this: "...I guess what I do is, I would prefer to be other people. I really want to be somebody else...". Sam observes this phenomenon occurring in a fair number of actors: "A lot of actors I have known...they have personalities but they are so deeply buried that they search after roles to take on and they become other things and they often don't appear to be anybody unless they are in a part". In the early stages of her career Kathy certainly fit Sam's description of an actor who preferred to be someone else rather than herself: "...my way into the theatre had to do with going somewhere so I didn't have to be in the world...". Other actors simply find that playing characters is helpful in comfortably and confidently interacting with the public and performing on stage: "I have a hard time going in front of a large group of people, like students, and being myself..." (John). Victoria offers a similar sentiment: "Because it's not you, yes it's very safe, in fact it's so safe you can really go places in that safety net...".

A final way in which the character "possesses" the actor is through physical transformation in which the actor, as him or herself, is no longer recognizable. Physical transformation does not necessarily transfer to a parallel inner experience, but it certainly seems to suggest the powerful presence of another persona through the replacement of the actor's recognizable self with that of another. Sam describes the step-by-step process of aging his young body: "I would start by walking, pacing back and forth, repeating my lines but at the same time becoming older...I also have a bit of a stoop and that would become more pronounced. My legs would stiffen up and I would start shuffling...then I would sit down and start putting on my make-up and that a was a real transformation...from being a young man to becoming older". Natalie, in playing an eccentric village character, recalls using makeup, a false nose, false teeth, grey hair, and all the "tricks of the trade" to disguise herself: "I staggered myself when I saw myself in the mirror, staggered myself, I couldn't find me in it anywhere...". There seems to be a strong element of
enjoyment and exhilaration in the discovery that one is able to transform into someone other than oneself, to be, in fact, unrecognizable: "...I love it very much when other people come up and are amazed that it's me, it makes me feel really good" (Darlene). John similarly sees this transformative ability as a mark of professional success: "I don't want them to see (John) up there. The worst thing you could say to me is, oh (John) you were just playing yourself". Anthony also notes that "...it's you, you can't escape that, but you do shows where people come up and afterwards and say that they hardly recognize you...". However, there are times when this transformative ability is so successful that it becomes suspect; as Darlene recalls, she played a character in which her fellow actors began responding to her as the character even when they were no longer on stage: "...all the actors responded to me as the character, I would have to take them out for a drink from time to time and sit them down and say now look, this is me...amazing how the people you work with will accept your character more than they will accept you, that was scary". Sam suggests that the ability to convincingly transform oneself is met with nervousness and suspicion by people outside the profession: "...a lot of people feel threatened by people acquiring roles that are not apparently theirs...".

Leaving the Character

In the performing process the formation and presentation of characters are inevitably followed by the necessity to leave the character behind and to, ideally, continue on to the next. Again, differences exist regarding the extent to which characters are "let go". At one extreme characters disappear for some actors immediately after the production is finished. At the other extreme, the characters continue on in an actor's life, remaining in the actor's personality or memory. Some actors experience both sides of the spectrum, depending on the way in which they were impacted by the character itself. In one unpleasant experience, Anthony was only too happy to move on and leave a character behind: "...that play was no fun for me. But after the play closed it was goodbye". Other actors see the ability to let go of one's characters as necessary, healthy, and essential to future effectiveness: "I do absolutely know that my life changes with playing it (the character) but because the whole act of acting is an exercise in death, because you do this whole creation of life, you have to let it go or else you'd be in a constant state of grief...even on stage if you hold onto a moment that worked you're not getting the next one or this one or this one and you end up in limbo - it's an exercise in letting go or in death" (Victoria). For Victoria, though she can be
virtually "possessed" by a character while she is playing it, once the play is finished she has "...no trouble
shedding it, it's gone". For both Darlene and Sam the separation between themselves and the characters is
firmly established thereby making the letting process easier; as Darlene states: "...I let them go really
easily in that way because I see them not as me and I don't get confused like that". Sam echoes Darlene's
views: "it's the character I'm with at the moment; it's not my role...If it's just something you're with at the
moment then when the time of parting comes then it's - been real nice and it's time to move on".

For some actors the characters do not quickly and cleanly disappear after their completion. While
Sam describes easily letting go of characters and moving on, he also admits that the characters do leave
traces within his memory: "I don't think any character ever leaves you...they're stored somewhere and
when necessary they're reborn or recalled, or sections of them, pieces of them that might fit in a new
character might be recalled". Of special note are the striking images used by the actors in describing the
ways in which characters continue to exist within the actor's psyche. John compares characters to
clothing: "It's like a piece of clothing, like a suit that you'll always love, that fits you perfectly and you put
it away and maybe you'll wear it again, who knows, it goes in the closet". Darlene uses the images of
both a scrapbook in her mind and characters living on as good friends: "Because she (a character) was so
close to me I guess there's a part of her that's in there; I think they're all in there...I have this scrapbook in
my brain that, when I want to, I can flip over and see these people...it's like I've had the privilege of
having many friends, they just happen to be inside of me...I let them go but yes they stay with me like old
friends". For Kathy, the way in which characters have remained with her has changed over her
professional life: "...for years they were just there in the corner, the ghosts of the people I played that just
kind of hung around and that were always there". As Kathy gradually shifted from living in the
imaginary world of her characters' lives and more towards creating characters firmly connected to her
own sense of identity, the "ghosts" of characters past became less present: "I'm not sure that they're
hanging around much anymore, maybe one or two...perhaps when they come more out of you they don't
have to hang around, you finish and say goodbye and that's that...I suppose before I didn't know where I
continued, so they had to hang around to help me continue".
Relevance of Structure to Drama-Based Therapies

This section has focused on the structure of the dialectic, that is, the experience of the two dialectical poles of actor and character, and the merging of the poles in creating a character; as well, the experience of the dialectic in performing the character and the balance between self and role over time have been explored.

Psychodrama

In relating this dialectical structure to the three main therapies which have been reviewed, Psychodrama relates the least of the three to his framework. While the existence of one pole, the actor or protagonist, is most strong and central, the presence of the second pole, the role or character, is more difficult to identify. The possibility that an individual may develop or adopt new roles in the course of Psychodrama may link somewhat to the actor's experience of creating a character but fundamentally the roles played and created evolve from the inner material and life of the protagonist. A couple of other possible links involve the existence of the auxiliary ego in which individuals may play more than one part of themselves, and the experience of playing a role in someone else's psychodrama. This latter example does involve taking on a character other than oneself however it is less necessary in this instance to truly develop such a role as it is more important for the protagonist to endow these other roles with meaning and project attributes upon them. However, it is true that fellow players can be impacted by the experience of playing a role in someone else's psychodrama just as an actor might be personally affected by playing a character.

Drama Therapy

In Drama Therapy the possibility exists for individuals to play different roles and characters through improvisational exercises, role playing, story telling and other theatre-related activities. These exercises and techniques are used as vehicles through which aspects of the self emerge. Individuals call upon their own ideas, memories, emotions, and experiences to use as material and whatever is chosen has some unique importance to the individual. It is interesting to note that in acting the actor similarly calls upon what is needed from within, the material sought is often from the emotional realm, and sometimes the role brings forth aspects of themselves they did not realize were there. Perhaps, similar to Drama Therapy,
the act of taking on a character serves as a kind of projective technique through which aspects of the self emerge.

Impasses or difficulties in dramatic exercises are the focus of exploration in Drama Therapy and among the many characteristics that a drama therapist looks for, one involves the ability to represent a number of characters as this reveals complexity of thought and the ability to view situations from a number of different perspectives. Creating a role involves the ability to construct people, events, and emotions, as well as knowledge of or experience with a range of social roles and situations. These are important factors in achieving a broad and well developed repertoire of roles which in Drama Therapy is a sign of psychological health. In relating this to the dialectical structure of actor and character, the ability to and necessity of truly taking on a character in order to bring it to life with truth and integrity for performance are central to the acting process and not unrelated to the factors involved in Drama Therapy. In taking on a character the actor must exhibit the abilities and qualities seen as crucial in Drama Therapy, in developing a healthy repertoire of roles.

Distancing is a central concept in Drama Therapy. In particular aesthetic distance, which indicates a healthy balance between self and role, is advocated in Drama Therapy as this balanced psychic position allows for equilibrium and catharsis and for the individual to make sense of his or her difficulty. In this state one can think and feel simultaneously, and insight and recognition are possible. Clients experience being both a participant and observer and can relive emotions without being overwhelmed by them. It is interesting, then, that actors also speak of seeking a balance between self and role and that both must co-exist in order to create a fully formed, truly alive character portrayal. Balancing self and role seems to be a core element in this dialectic. While entering the world of the character is important, some separation becomes a very essential element in maintaining control and monitoring the effectiveness and quality of performance. Some actors extoll the excitement and exhilaration of "losing" oneself in a role, breaking down all inner defenses, and giving oneself over to a character, and other actors caution against the creation of a character that is not firmly rooted within a firm sense of self. The term of underdistancing, used in Drama Therapy, might be applied to those actors who lose all separation between themselves and a role. Overdistanced actors might cling to set methods and would be reluctant to take risks and chances which would enable them to enter into the life and truth of the character they are portraying. Many actors
speak of trying to marry these two extremes. In Drama Therapy assisting individuals in overdistancing, because they tend to underdistance, can involve playing a role of an "other" rather than the role of the "self". In this way they are able to remain involved while the existence of a role other than themselves allows them to stand back from the experience. This is not unlike the balance actors struggle to attain in creating characters.

**Fixed-Role Therapy**

In Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) comparisons can definitely be made to the dialectical structure involved in the acting process, as both involve the existence of the self and a new role or character to be adopted. In both, material is drawn from within the individual but in FRT it is for the purpose of assessing areas of difficulty and creating a new character sketch to "try on". In acting the emphasis is on what the actor can bring to the character, though this does not preclude the character bringing beneficial elements to the actor, and in FRT the focus is upon that which a new role can bring the client. In FRT, as in acting, the intent is not for individuals to "become" the character, neither are they expected to give up their own perspectives, only to entertain the possibility of, and experience, new ones. Of course a fundamental difference in structure is that in FRT the new characters have been created based on the character sketches of the clients themselves. There is no play from which to draw clues as to the character's personality, instead the life of the individual provides the dramatic material from which a character is created. In taking on a new character through FRT the issues of merging self and role emerge, as they do for actors. In FRT clients are invited to take a new character into their own lives and live it for a brief period of time. This echoes some of the actors' experiences who describe "living and breathing" their characters during the period in which they rehearse and perform them. In FRT clients are encouraged to act, talk, eat, and even dream the way the character would and, as in the actor's experience, rehearsals prepare the individual for "performance". In FRT rehearsal involves progressively more challenging role plays in which the client practices for interpersonal exchanges in real life. Beyond the rehearsals, however, little is mentioned in FRT which suggests ways in which the client achieves a sense of the depth and vitality of this new role and there is no play or script to give it form and life. It is apparent, therefore, that one pole of the dialectic (the self) plays a central part in FRT but that entering into the world of the character (the second pole) and truly experiencing that character's inner life is more
of a challenge and less defined in this therapeutic approach. In adding to or enriching FRT perhaps some of the elements described by actors in merging with their characters might be helpful. Actors describe, for instance, that finding some commonalities between the character and corresponding aspects of the actors themselves are important in creating a connection with that role. As well, they merge with a character through connecting with universal and fundamental emotions which the character represents and with which most people can identify. Connections are also made through identifying similarities and differences between actor and role; these comparisons seem to also heighten an actor's own sense of self awareness. When actors truly merge with their characters they often experience an affection, respect, caring and compassion for these people they have temporarily adopted, which may also indicate a healthy sense of separateness in seeing the character as a separate entity. Actors often must think carefully of the roles they are willing to play, what innermost material they feel prepared to access and what "journey" they are willing to take. Similarly clients may need to consider what qualities and behaviours they are willing to take into the world and rehearsals must prepare clients for the realities and risks involved.

The issue of distance or balance emerges in FRT as clients are encouraged to truly live the character and yet not abandon their own sense of self as the character is to be abandoned after a brief period of experimentation. Many actors emphasize the necessity for balance between self and role. Perhaps some actors' experience of the inner presence of actor, character, and observer might be worth fostering in FRT, especially with those clients who may tend to give themselves over to the role being enacted. The presence of an observer element within the client might also enable him or her to assess and reflect upon the success of the experience. While totally giving oneself over to a role may offer a welcome facade and protection which enables a client to experiment with new behaviours, "possession" experiences where a character is adopted without being firmly anchored within an individual's own experience and identity can lead to confusing and frightening experiences, as was indicated by some actors interviewed. As well, real life actions and consequences which are born out of powerful encounters with characters, such as actors marrying other actors as a result of roles they have played together, must be watched for and avoided in FRT. In addition, for actors or clients who are unhappy with themselves, new roles cannot simply offer the opportunity to be someone other than themselves, that is, they are not to provide a replacement for the self.
For actors who describe successfully becoming a character, they generally identify a merging process between the self and the character. While in FRT the self is incorporated in full form with all its complexity and uniqueness, if, as actors emphasize, it is important to truly enter into the world of the character in order to successfully enact and create a vital and effective characterization, then FRT may need to further elaborate and address how that other "pole" in the dialectic is to be developed in the therapy process.

Finally, it is interesting to note that actors experience a sense of success when friends do not recognize them in their roles or remark that they appear different from their everyday selves; similarly in FRT one of the hallmarks of progress is when others tell clients that they seem "different".
3. Dynamics of the Structure

Having described the structure of the dialectic as involving the central relationship between actor and character, it follows that the way in which the dialectic is accomplished and the dynamic factors essential to the dialectical process, which lead to an effective character portrayal, require explication. In short, this chapter will focus on how the dialectical relationship is accomplished and the elements which the actors deem important or necessary in this process. It is first important to acknowledge that actors quite clearly hold unique approaches which they have found to be effective for them in a personal way. The way the dialectic is accomplished therefore does involve the necessary inclusion of actors' own individual processes of character development and the factors which they have found personally effective and rewarding. However, for the purposes of highlighting commonalities and themes which emerge across actors experiences, four general areas will be discussed here which represent central factors often present in the dynamic process of character development and performance.

Sources of Knowledge

In developing characters, actors often must gather additional information, knowledge, and understanding as it is impossible for them to have all that is needed within themselves to play each and every character that they will encounter. Thus, they must find ways to gather the material to add to their own existing knowledge.

Research and Observation

While finding commonalities with characters is important and usually possible, actors often have to research their role or search the outside world around them for images, behaviours, and clues into human nature, to use as material for their characters.

Some of the actors interviewed recount instances in which research has been important to them. To John this means asking some basic and logical questions: "...what would I do in this situation, if I was playing an accountant for example? Well I'm not an accountant, so how does an accountant work? Well I go to my accountant, then I know how my accountant looks and how he talks, so I end up giving my impression of what an accountant is". Playing a deeply violent character required Anthony to become familiar with behaviour deeply foreign to him: "I went to the YMCA and worked out on a big heavy punching bag to figure out what it was like to beat somebody half to death, to figure out how it felt to hit
something that hard repeatedly...I always do a little bit of research". Anthony continues, suggesting that sometimes seemingly tiny bits of research can accumulate together to provide the central content of the character: "...there was a line in (a play) where one guy says he has some tea that smells like burnt rubber tires and my character says 'Lapsang Soochong'. I had to say this so I realized I at least had to go get some Lapsang Soochong to see if it smelled like burnt rubber tires...You do little things like that and if you're lucky they all add up to something...I could say that line as if I knew because I did know". As Victoria has never had children, playing a woman giving birth required that she do some investigation: "...I had to do a lot of research about what you get like when you're in the throngs of labour, what does it feel like to be pregnant". In another instance Victoria found herself playing a therapist when she, herself, had little familiarity with the profession: "...I'd never been to therapy, I had no idea what therapists do, so I went and sat in on a therapy session with a patient and doctor...and I was suprised how firm the therapist was...it wasn't a coddling situation at all, so that really helped me with my role".

Using observations of other people and of the outside world in general are a part of the research process in building a character. Observing other people seems to be an effective method of gathering material for a role: "...you watch other people on the bus to see if there's anybody that reminds you of the character you're playing. You're aware of things you never saw before, you see couples having fights in restaurants and you spy on them. Actors are incredible voyeurs. They want to watch it happen so they know how to do it" (Anthony). Darlene finds herself behaving in a similar manner: "...I steal from people I see on the street. It's like Olivier said, if you see something you like you're crazy not to use it".

Accumulated Experience

In addition to research and observation, which augments what is lacking from an actor's own wealth of life experience and knowledge, actors also draw upon the accumulated experiences which arise from characters they have already played. From years in the acting profession actors gradually develop an ever-expanding repository of acting experiences which can be called upon to assist them with other characters: "I don't think a character ever leaves you...they're stored somewhere and when necessary they're re-born or recalled..." (Sam). For John, a character is like a piece of clothing: "...you put it away and maybe you'll wear it again...Sometimes different sections of different characters help you with other characters". For Darlene, past characters become "a scrapbook in (her) brain", and when characters have
been important to her, parts of them have remained within her. For Natalie, characters become part of her memory that she can return to and are registered within her "emotional diary". For Anthony, what is retained and retrieved is defined slightly differently with more of an emphasis on a remembered process: "Experience accumulates and so you can play a really weird character and you suddenly remember that another time you played a character like this so whatever from one stuck with you, you can suddenly remember it and bring it to a new character. Maybe it's like a carpenter building a house, it isn't any one house that he remembers it's just the act of building well that he remembers...". Ultimately actors build upon their acting experience over time and, with ever increasing knowledge, have more and more to bring to a character: "In the beginning of acting you're not sure what that something is...then later on in life you have an idea of what you want to bring to something (a character) when you come in, that's part of why you do a part - this is what I'm bringing in with me" (John).

**Significant Others**

In addition to securing the needed information required to play a character, actors also are greatly helped or hindered by those with whom they work. These "significant others" can be divided into four main categories: playwright, director, fellow actors, and audience. In each instance the actor builds relationships with these central players who all impact the way in which a character is formed and performed and affect the nature of the experience for the actor.

**The Playwright**

The first player involved in the creation of a character is, of course, the playwright who conceptualizes the play, outlines the scenes, and writes the lines which, hopefully, give the actors the structure and material they need. Some of the actors interviewed truly see themselves as the messenger of the playwright's vision: "You really are that medium, that middle thing and the writer's words, the directions, pass through you and go out to the audience" (John). Similarly, Deborah sees herself as the communicator of the playwright's ideas: "In this work I'm here to be the instrument of the playwright and to sell his or her ideas in the most familiar manner so that no-one doubts it for a minute...".

Because actors are inevitably exposed to plays which vary widely in terms of quality of writing, actors express deep appreciation for those characters which have been well written and masterfully crafted, thereby making the actor's job a great deal easier: "It's so easy to act good writing, you don't have
to do anything, it's there, all the history is in the words, you understand why the character's behaviour is such because it's given in the writing...Shakespeare deals with a lot of human emotions which are very extreme, there's always insanity and suicide, but because the writing is so good it's very easy to act those emotions...how could you be suicidal or murderous or borderline insane with bad writing? You'd look like an idiot up there" (Victoria). Natalie also emphasizes the power of good writing and, in one instance, was able to appreciate the quality of writing despite the difficulty involved in playing a deeply disturbed character: "...it was like playing all of the evils of the world in this child (the character). It was exquisite writing, some of the best writing I've ever encountered". In another instance superb writing was the main reason Natalie found a character so fulfilling to portray: "The insights into human nature through role specifically have been probably greater than many roles I've played along the way because the writing is so clever, it's so psychologically rich".

The playwright's script is what gives actors the information which they then translate into living words and actions; the content of the play therefore is crucial to giving actors indications concerning the nature of their characters: "...there are clues in the script and what other characters say about your character that indicates what they're like" (Victoria). Some actors have found that the differing content and subject matter within the play greatly affect the nature of the total experience. Darlene, for example, discovered that she felt less personally and emotionally "at risk" in one play and compared it to another instance in which a colleague experienced distress due to the disturbing nature of a play's content: "...it was very pure and I was safe in that structure because there was no violence...there was a tremendous amount of violence in the other play and violence can be very threatening". John summarizes the fundamental purpose the content serves in providing the substance of the character: "I can't act a concept, I don't know what that is, all I can act is what's there in the lines".

In probably the most striking example of the profound impact the playwright can have on an actor's experience, Jean describes an instance in which she felt the playwright's presence throughout the entire rehearsal and performance period. This playwright, in writing about a woman dying of cancer, was in actual fact writing about his own family: "...this is his family, this is him ridding himself of his own demons. So I'm only a puppet in that and yet I have to come up with the stuff that he says was true". In being enormously dependent on the words of the playwright, an inherent aspect of an actor's work, Jean
could not escape carrying the burden of this playwright's personal difficulties: "The problem was that there were unresolved demons in the script so I didn't have that release afterwards". Jean explains this desired but unrealized "release" further: "...there were other extraordinarily malevolent forces of ugliness...that were never resolved, that were left inside of you, you would almost give birth to this thing every night and then go back inside and live with this heaviness more and more as it went. So because there was not the ability within the play itself to release yourself you could release neither the audience nor yourself...you had to fail because you were the actor, you weren't the composer or the playwright...he wasn't facing the truth of what he was writing and he put it all on this poor lady (the character)".

Throughout rehearsal and performance Jean felt the weight of the playwright's presence: "...the experience with him was almost like the old man river, it as as if he got on my back and I was carrying him across but then he wouldn't get off on the other side". Ultimately, it was left to Jean to resolve for herself the issues raised within the play as best she could: "If the playwright doesn't finish the job or the job is half done as it was in (this play) then you're left with this chaos and you have to go back into life with it and sort it out...". Jean, in the end, concluded: "So I was dealing with two men, I feel, the playwright and the director, who were wrestling with their own demons of success and failure and life and death and letting me carry it but being of no help at all". Jean's vivid descriptions illustrate the enormous impact the playwright's creation can have on the actor's experience. Jean also indicates the impact of the director, another important "significant other".

The Director

In discussing the influence of significant others, actors seem to have the most to say about the role of the director, both regarding personal experiences they have had as well as qualities they feel a good director should possess.

Actors certainly remember those directors who were helpful and inspirational and who, in some cases, impacted their careers. Darlene recalls one such director who created the opportunity for her to discover her acting talents: "I always danced because dance was a silent art and I couldn't read...(this director) gave me a lead in a play the very next year, so he made me go act, which I am very grateful for". For Darlene, who had been dyslexic and subsequently felt she could not learn lines from a written script, this director's faith in her led her from silence to a successful acting career. For John, a director was a
central part of a very meaningful acting experience: "We were like brothers, we were able to work together to flesh out that character and he was able to bring that other stuff out of me I thought I would never be able to get out...like a teacher almost...there was always something coming out of me that was good, sometimes directors do that, parts do that. It will always be an important part of my life". Natalie also discovered the powerful role a director can play in drawing out inner elements of the actor, including elements of which the actor is unaware. In playing a powerful character, Natalie assumed she did not have the right qualities or abilities and was then greatly surprised and affected by the director's response: "...power, that means she (the character) has to be beautiful, she has to be tall and slim and beautiful...and he (the director) said 'don't be silly, you are her, you're bossy and you tell everybody the way it should be, you're strong, this role is written for you'...And I heard him with ears that I'd never had before". When Victoria went through the trauma of playing a role based on her own life it was a director who facilitated a breakthrough by providing emotional support, forcing her to let go of the overly intellectual approach she had adopted, and encouraging her to embrace a more instinctual method: "...what he did was the last thing I ever expected but boy did it ever unstick me...it stopped me from figuring out how to do everything right...if you try a lot of intellectual work sometimes it's just as much your enemy...". For Darlene, it was a director who put her in the terrifying and vulnerable position of exclusively being herself within a role: "...I was not allowed to speak a word until it came from my soul...he wanted to get my rhythms, my real rhythms, my real thoughts...the minute he didn't believe a word he'd stop me and say 'no, you can't do that'...I was completely vulnerable because I didn't know what I was doing...finally I just went on blind faith that he knew what he wanted...". Luckily the director was both competent and aware of Victoria's capabilities, and the result was a successful and memorable performance: "...I'm a character woman...character women are terrified of playing themselves. So, to get me to that he really did an amazing number...he completely stripped me of every piece of artifice - and it was a spectacular experience".

A testimony to the significant impact directors can have on actors' experiences is the number of instances in which actors comment on directors who have been detrimental and even destructive. According to John: "...there are three kinds of directors: directors who are terrific and really help you, they're about three percent; directors who don't help you but stay out of your way; and directors who don't
help you and don't stay out of your way, and that was the kind of director I had...he wasn't there for me". Unfortunately, that was also the kind of director Anthony, in one instance, felt that he encountered: "I don't think I will be so tolerant if I'm in a situation like that again...I could have done a way better performance if he had treated me with respect because I'm not afraid to try new things...". Directors can negatively impact the direction an actor takes in forming a character: "...if somebody throws you a curve ball and it's not right, it can send you in a direction that is completely wrong..." (Natalie). However, of greater seriousness is the negative impact directors can have on the actor's personal and emotional well-being. In Victoria's situation, in which she played a role based on her own life, the first director was simply unable to help: "The director unfortunately didn't have a lot of experience so she didn't know what to do to handle me going through this so we called in (another) director...". In other instances directors have been more overtly destructive; in observing a fellow colleague who went through an enormously personal and emotional experience at the hands of a powerful director, Darlene observed that, while this colleague came through the experience emotionally intact, "...for some of the people (this director) did a lot of damage, because some people weren't strong enough to handle it". She further adds: "It's liberating but it needs to be judiciously handled by someone with enormous sensitivity because I've seen that power abused...". She concludes with: "...some of the best actors in the world are destroyed by bad directors...". In other instances, actors describe directors' lack of support or guidance which possibly discourage actors from exploring roles they would have otherwise been able to effectively portray. For Kathy, lack of support was significant in what she feels was her limited growth as an actress: "...this is the sadness of how one restricts oneself because nobody helped you...because of the things that I had already accepted that were said to me about myself or that I had come to understand, which were limiting, I left those (roles) there...it's pretty common in this business that people are pretty narrow about who should play what...". In John's case, he decided to play a role despite a director's reservations: "One of the first directors we approached, he said he wasn't sure about me playing the part. And I thought, maybe he's right, maybe I'm not right for it, and I shied away from it and then I thought, what the hell, I'm going to do it with gusto and it's going to be for me...". In this instance, John's confidence in going against this director's opinion resulted in a successful performance and much critical acclaim.
Aside from specifically positive or negative experiences, actors describe ways in which directors generally are or have been important. To Sarah, when an actor enters into a working relationship with a director, "...you get into a parent/child relationship which you (the actor) want to accept but you don't want to accept, definitely a necessary component, you can't do without them (directors)". For Victoria, when actors encounter difficulties in the acting process and find themselves "way down in this mire", then it is difficult to get out "...unless you have someone professional who really knows what they're doing with you". Kathy gained a new appreciation for directors after performing in a production that did not have one: "We needed someone to take care of it and I needed someone to take care of me, and the other actor and I were so intensively involved with each other we couldn't really do that...there's that point when you need someone to steer the ship, someone to say that you're doing OK". The presence of a director not only, ideally, provides support and guidance but also adds a new and different perspective: "...you can say I (Victoria) would never do that and so maybe you would decide that the character would never do that, and then of course the director might say 'no, don't think about how (Victoria) would react, let's try something different'". Victoria's appreciation for the director's input is echoed by Natalie's belief that an actor should, "...not get too overly defensive so that you put walls up, because that director has maybe got a take you haven't even thought about".

Rehearsal and performance, as will be discussed in more depth later in this section, involve elements of risk and vulnerability. It is the director who can succeed or fail in providing the needed support and environment conducive to actors feeling they can freely and safely risk and experiment. "If the environment is right and the director makes you feel you can get up there and do something that might be wrong then the experiments can happen. Kathy also finds support necessary in the process of exploring unfamiliar territory: "...when you're doing something that's new or you're going into areas you haven't gone before...that's when you need that reinforcement...". The possibility of not receiving that needed support can be unnerving for the actor: "...I guess there's fear that you're going to be misunderstood by the director..." (Sarah).

Some actors are very clear about what they want from directors. Natalie outlines her preferences: "One, you want your director to be more intelligent than you are and to afford you new insights". Sam describes the director as, "...that parent figure, the authority figure...". Darlene expresses her view that,
"...you need a gentle, kind director who is sort of like a tour guide and tells you about the landmarks along the way".

Whether they prefer an assertive or gentle style, a parent or a brother figure, actors are clear that the success of a performance, the quality of the experience, and even personal well-being are greatly impacted by the director's contribution.

Fellow Actors

Except for one-person plays, actors must inevitably interact with each other, and both relationships between characters as well as relationships between the actors affect the nature of each participant's individual experience. Jean describes playing the same character on two different occasions, thinking she would not have much work to do the second time around. However, as she discovered, "...you have to start again and you have to start specifically with those people that you are playing with because acting is not what I do or what you do, it's what happens in the space between us". Deborah recalls an instance in which this interdependence between actors turned into one of conflict and tension: "...I understood the psychological element of my character and (this other actor) did not of his character... So he was shocked to learn that the audience didn't think that he was just funny and lusty...and he was angry at me almost as though I had made that happen, it was almost as though we were in another parallel play...". In addition to creating stress during the duration of the production, sadly this experience damaged the friendship these two actors had previously enjoyed. Jean found herself frustrated by the difficulties of a fellow actress who was having such personal reactions to her character that she was unable to rehearse without becoming upset and even hysterical. Jean finally confronted this colleague, as the entire production was at risk, and recounts her exact words: "...look, this is getting to me now, I know you're scared, I know you don't believe that I'm as scared as you but I'm somehow using it, and if you keep this up it is going to affect me so badly I will become incapable of doing this too and that's the end...". John found himself reacting to a fellow actress who was taking reality onstage too far: "Sometimes you work with people who have to be in the moment, they think they have to push you, that they've got to hurt you in order for it to be real. I don't believe that as such but I do believe in emotional moments...and I need support from another actor I'm working with...". In playing a classic character, Jean describes a fascinating experience of receiving strength and comfort from the sensation that all the actors who came before her in playing the
same role were somehow still present and alive: "When you play a character like (this one), all the actresses who ever played it before are part of this great company and you're terror-stricken playing it and yet there's a point where you feel they join you, where because you've stuck with it, because you're almost there, that when you get there there's all these other people who've played it before who say 'welcome'".

Thus the presence of fellow actors, both past and present, is keenly felt and impossible for any individual actor to ignore, as interaction and interdependence are inherent in the acting process.

Audience

"In playing a role there is also how the role is being played with the audience" (Sam). The main purpose of theatre, a collaboration involving playwrights, directors, actors, and designers, is to present a final, finished production to audiences. All efforts are primarily oriented towards communicating images, ideas, and creative forms of expression to the world at large, and to, in some cases, reflect the world back to itself.

Actors frequently comment on the vast difference between rehearsal and performance, a difference marked by changes in relationships: "In rehearsal it's building the relationships with the actors, director and characters, and during performance of course you're introducing the audience so relationships become quite different" (Sam). The audience also causes actors to adapt and alter their performances, as the actors integrate the responses of the audience into their characterizations: "...the greatest teacher for me in doing the part is the first audience...you can practice playing baseball with your friends but until you're out there in the big field playing a game you don't know what's going to happen" (John). Darlene voices similar sentiments: "...the minute I start dancing with the audience they tell me where to go, they tell me what's working and what's not and then I'm off".

Responding to the cues from the audience seems to be an important element in tending to the dynamic relationship between actor and spectator, thereby ensuring that the actors receive a needed sense of support and success: "I can get through a lot if the audience is with me. If the audience isn't there then you have to perform for yourself or for the other people onstage" (John). Through the performing of a play, in which events and issues paralleled her own real life experiences, Deborah received enormous and welcome support from the audience: "Once the audience was in, suddenly my character had four hundred people on my side. Before that I had nobody on my side". In a very personal sense, the acknowledgement
and empathy the audience gave the character resembled the support Deborah had received from other people in her own life when events, similar to those in the play, took place: "...with the audience there on my side, the energy shifted; it was like in the real situation in my own life, once other people knew what was going on I grew stronger...It was easy for me to do it once the audience was there, the difference I felt between rehearsing the show and playing this show was day and night". As Deborah played scenes of triumph and resolution as the character, scenes which she had never experienced in her own past circumstances, the audience members became, in a sense, witnesses to her pain, struggle, and ultimate victory: "...I have the last words and the audience just roars, it made all my skin creep, all my hair stand on end...it had to do with me winning, me triumphing...it had to do with poetic justice".

In conclusion, the total environment within which the actor builds a character plays an integral and inevitable part in the success or failure of the final outcome. Trusting those with whom one works is important in facilitating the creative process. As Kathy recalls, one of the most rewarding acting experiences in her career emerged out of a strong and supportive environment: "...the conditions were good, the timing was right, I did allow myself to trust them with what was coming out...there was good feedback, so the whole thing was probably the most positive experience I've ever had...I really came to understand what feeling safe really means". Darlene concurs with this sentiment and concludes: "...one has to have a lot of faith in the people you're working with and in the process...".

Risk

In focusing on factors deemed important or necessary in the process of character development, the actors interviewed often refer to a less tangible but very potent element of risk. Words such as anxiety, fear, risk, and vulnerability are used to describe this unavoidable and often necessary quality which is an inherent part of creating and performing a role.

An early sign of fear or anxiety for actors seems to appear when the euphoria of being cast for a part is replaced by a realization of the daunting task ahead. Basic to acting is the fear that the final product, the portrayal of the character, will be a failure: "...you want so much to do the part...and then when you get it you go, oh I've got to do it now. Then you go through the whole situation of, will I be able to do it, will I fail" (John). Victoria's tendency to become obsessed by the characters she plays emerges out of her desire to ensure success: "...I obsess about it and I can't shake it because I'm worried I'm not going to do a
good job so I really get involved". In playing characters outside her realm of experience, Natalie gives two examples which reflect feelings of uncertainty and concern. In the first example she plays an eccentric village character much older than herself: "...I think - what? Wait a second, now that's too old, how am I going to pull that off...". In the second example Natalie anticipates playing a woman of power and wealth: "...not knowing what that is, to be very very rich, I may have bit off more than I can chew...this one's going to be tough, really tough". This anxiety, however, seems to be the norm for Natalie: "...I'm never convinced ever with any project that I can pull it off...". Once an actor has secured a part and contemplated the job ahead, feelings of fear and anxiety often follow the actor into the rehearsal process: "...we get on our feet and the questions start coming out and you want it to be there but you know it's not there and you're afraid you're never going to get there...it's more knowing that you don't fit this character yet" (Sarah). Anthony echoes these sentiments: "It's the figuring out of it and the anxiety of whether I'm going to be able to do it or not that hurts".

With fear, risk, anxiety, and apprehension often present in the first stages of the acting process it is apparent that many actors come to view the presence of these factors as unavoidable and to be expected. In fact, the ability to take risks and withstand uncertainty appears to be an essential part of the creative process in which the character can only be discovered or realized if the actor is prepared to relinquish absolute control and enter into a spirit of experimentation and exploration. Natalie describes how this process, for her, occurs: "...this is one process, it's my process - you go to number ten and then you start pulling back, because it's not until you can go the full extreme that you can find the balance of performance or of reality for that person...". In order to "go to the extreme", the actor must be able to perceive failure as a natural part of the rehearsal process: "...you have to have the confidence and the lack of shame to be able to make a fool of yourself before you can make any discoveries...". Victoria explains the necessity of the right rehearsal atmosphere which supports creative risk-taking: "...a good rehearsal process will allow you to experiment, take risks, and fail...and that's one of the ways you discover things, you do it wrong, you don't try to figure it out right".

The willingness to risk failure and take chances inevitably links to a de-emphasis on over-intellectualization in the acting process: "I see actors, and we do this, over analyze and navel gaze to the point where we have everything down and intellectually that's wonderful but you haven't touched your
centre. It's great to have an understanding of every move you make but sometimes it's extraordinary to go out there with no understanding at all" (Darlene). Victoria agrees with this caution against excessive intellectual control: "...if you try a lot of intellectual work sometimes it's just as much your enemy...". To Anthony, the results of too much control are evident in the final product: "...there are people you see acting and they're just not good, they're too protective of themselves, they're afraid to go out on a limb". In being less self protective and more willing to risk, actors open themselves up to a more instinctual, spontaneous approach: "...you don't have any time to think or react, you just do it, you do a really basal, primal, instinctual kind of thing" (Victoria). As well, in being willing to risk, actors become more open to considering new and different ideas: "...I can say I (Victoria), would never do that...but then of course the director might say, 'no don't think about how (Victoria) would react, lets try something different...what if one day someone did do that in that situation'...So you have to be willing to try things to see where those testing points are".

Within the structure of rehearsal and performance, however, actors do identify elements of safety and protection which make risk-taking and experimentation a great deal easier. As was mentioned previously, working with supportive directors and cast members is a major part of a positive environment: "...the conditions were good, the time was right, I did allow myself to trust them with what was happening inside ...actually allowing myself to take risks I hadn't taken before..." (Kathy). The nature of playing a person who is not, in fact, oneself also gives actors the freedom to take chances within the protection of the character: "I would certainly never behave the way she (the character) behaves... but since it's not me I could take it really far. Now if the character had been named (Victoria) and the writer said, 'well I based this character on you!'...I'd really hold back and be nice and I'd want to look good...".

Darlene tells of a powerful instance which exemplifies the phenomenon of truly "letting go" in the acting process which, in this instance, proved to be an inspirational experience. The director cast Darlene because he wanted her for the part, meaning that he expected her to bring an enormous part of herself to the performance. She was not allowed to speak unless it came from her "soul" and she experienced intense feelings of vulnerability and confusion: "...I thought I had completely lost control. I was terrified, I was completely vulnerable because I didn't know what I was doing...". In trusting the director and attempting to follow his wishes, Darlene had little choice but to relinquish her usual control: "...everything
was broken down to such an extent that I didn't know anymore what I was doing, so I had to trust, I had to just let it go. While this process was terrifying, Darlene found performance surprisingly easy as she had already explored the character so extensively in rehearsal. This rehearsal process gave her a structure upon which she could depend while onstage: "...in performance when there was a moment of welling up I was able to go to this woman, to go to that space and to feel perfectly safe that that process was there...it allowed me the latitude to take it apart at any point because I had already done that, it's like if you sew a dress and take it apart...you can sew it back together". She later adds: "...at times even when I would move out of the area of safety I was still safe...because I had gone so far with it; we had taken it so far past anything...". As a final result, Darlene experienced an exhilarating and profound single performance which surpasses all other in her memory: "...one night during performance...the minute I realized it was good I could relax and allow the process and the process worked through me, it was like a channel and it was happening because all of that had been learned in rehearsal...I remember I hit the stage and I don't remember anything that I did...It was an amazing, creative experience, a breakthrough in that there was the loss of this need to control...". In retrospect Darlene feels the enormous risk and vulnerability she experienced, coupled with sound, effective directorial guidance, were the central ingredients which led to a truly transcendent experience and performance. She concludes: "...it's a true act of creativity because it's only when you can release it that it really is pure".

Darlene's unique experience led to feelings of intense vulnerability, an emotion experienced by other actors as well. Because actors are the instruments of their work, they can feel particularly vulnerable in the face of criticism: "...somehow it's like you're being judged when your work is criticized...it's like they're judging you, your soul or something..." (Anthony). For Victoria playing a character based on her own life was the most vulnerable experience of her life: "...that's a really scary thing to display this open book in front of people...to go up on stage and talk to the audience as yourself is terrifying. If you can go up on stage and talk to the audience with the face of some other character...it makes you think it's safe. As soon as you think it's you you're so vulnerable, you're totally exposed, you feel naked". Darlene concurs with this preference for having a character as protection: "I'm real vulnerable when I'm out there if it's just me. You either have to have an extremely bruised or very intact ego, very needy ego or very solid ego, to just be out there as yourself...". Deborah experienced intense feelings of vulnerability in
playing a character whose life uncannily paralleled her own. The emotions and issues which quickly arose for her personally caused her to initially distance herself from the character: "...when I first read the play I defended my vulnerability and my inner feelings around that by reading my character as quite crusty and defended". However, the director requested a different characterization, desiring more vulnerability in Deborah's portrayal of the role. In respecting and trusting the director, Deborah complied but not without personal risk to herself: "...I bought that line so I had no defenses, I had no defenses in rehearsals". As a result Deborah struggled throughout rehearsal to be true to the character while combatting the enormous personal vulnerability the character evoked.

While vulnerability on stage can be terrifying for the actor, some actors see it as a powerful link with their audiences, a common bond through a universal emotion. As Victoria discovered: "I thought if I showed my vulnerability people wouldn't like me because I'd be thought of as weak when in fact...it takes a lot of courage to show that truth...there's a part of us that is yearning for some understanding. That vulnerability is something as an actor you have to have...that's what makes people want to keep watching". Anthony echoes both the difficulty and necessity of bringing vulnerability to the stage: "A lot of actors are loath to portray vulnerability because to do it well you have to bring your own vulnerability to it...I'm not afraid of being vulnerable because I know that everyone's vulnerable". These actors suggest that risk, anxiety, and vulnerability are often part of the acting process and are, in fact, useful and can be harnessed to the actor's benefit. As Darlene states clearly: "...I don't think you're really good unless you're scared...". For some actors the way to combat fear is to translate it into a challenge: "The fear, the anxiety, the terror helps set you into action, but there also is a professionalism about it and you would think that well...I know I've done it before, and if it looks like an impossible task then you just have to treat it like it's a great challenge..." (Anthony). John sees challenge as the "flipside" of potential failure: "...there's a certain challenge, the other side of failing - will I fail? Let's see". While fear may be important to spur an actor to action, it is crucial that it not take over and dominate the actor's experience or failure will be a greater likelihood: "...if you indulge your fear in any way you've had it...it's panic, it's the god Pan...and you have to make it your own and hold on and use it, but if you let yourself go and indulge your fear then chaos is come and you're useless and you have to quit" (Jean). Ultimately it is of paramount importance that actors harness whatever is at their disposal and whatever arises from their
experience to their advantage: "In performance there's a tremendous stress level, either you use that energy...or you lose it" (John). Jean succinctly sums up this theme: "Embrace everything and use it".

Risk, as a factor in the acting process, embodies a dialectic in which opposing poles such as success and failure, risk and challenge, painful vulnerability and exhilarating truthfulness must co-exist, cycling back and forth as the actor searches for a manageable balance. While risk, anxiety, and vulnerability often create internal havoc and terror for the actor, ironically all these lay the fertile ground from which discovery, inspiration, challenge, and success arise.

Commitment

A final factor which emerges from actors' testimonies is that of commitment which exists on several levels. Actors indicate a commitment to the character, to the audience, and to the principle of truth itself. Often it is this dedication which carries actors through difficult experiences and is tied to an actor's sense of purpose and meaning in the acting profession.

Natalie focuses quite specifically on the importance of honesty in acting: "...the whole key to this business of mine, this art of mine, is being deathly honest, if people watching think for a second that you're pretending, then they won't believe you...I give an audience honesty, and they respect it, and they want to see more of it...". Natalie later adds: "...it's funny how people think it's all about pretending but there's no room for pretense on the stage, none, you've got to really do it...".

In this quest for truth in performance actors pursue various means and ways to find the reality and depth of the characters they are playing. In some cases this requires that actors confront for themselves what the characters are facing. Jean recalls that her commitment to truth led her to experiencing the reality of death: "...if I was not 'dying', if this lady was not really facing death every night then the play didn't work. I couldn't just pretend...if I wasn't facing all those deaths, the death of the spirit, the death of the artist, and the fact that she was coming close to death herself, if I didn't do that then the glory of this woman and her spirit and her bravery and her beauty would not have shone...". The commitment to truth also leads some actors to seek an emotional connection which enables them to relate personally to the character. Natalie searches out the vulnerability within a character: "...the first thing I always look for is the pink spot in any character...the thing we're most frightened of or the thing that we're most fearful of exposing...". For Natalie, core feelings are universal and once accessed can provide that powerful link of
truth between actor and character: "...the connection for me is pain...I think everybody knows, I do for sure, what it feels like inside my heart, inside my guts, and inside my head to be sad and to be hurt in a way that you almost can't articulate...". In seeking honesty in performance, actors also believe it is important to bring their own emotions and understanding to the characters: "...if you're really and truly trying to be integral in the character you're going to allow any feeling to surface that's going to come up because you want to portray it truthfully...". To Jean, there is no limit to what the actor can call upon from within: "You use all your compassion, all your understanding, all your sensitivity and your knowledge of life everytime...". In the case of some characters, actors need to access and utilize their inner lives to a greater extent than in daily life: "...today such a demand is put on you to make it absolutely real and recognizable in a deep inner way...that to fill the hugeness and size of any Shakespeare you would have to draw on more of whatever was required than you would need if you needed to express emotions during the day..." (Jean). That being said, actors do not have unlimited emotional resources and, while being true to the character is a priority, they need to give to the role only that which is necessary to fulfill their sense of commitment: "...you don't stay in this morass of agony or grief or whatever, you just touch it and you touch it only if you need it..." (Jean).

An actor's commitment and dedication to honest characterizations are not without personal costs and difficulties. In requiring that actors face what the character faces, find emotional connections with the role, and search for emotional and experiential material from within in order to find the truest character portrayal, actors must withstand gruelling and emotionally draining acting experiences as a result. Natalie recalls playing a deeply disturbed young girl: "...that was the toughest role I've ever played in my life. It was like playing in the mouth of hell every night, it hurt deeply, it physically hurt me to play that role, it was like some huge creature was sitting on me all the time and I could never get out from underneath it". It was Natalie's commitment to playing the character with truthfulness that made bearing the personal pain worthwhile and possible: "...hers was a voice that needed to be heard very loudly...in order to do that I had to take her with me everywhere". Being truthful to the character required Natalie to enter into this child's pain which was not without significant personal cost. During the rehearsings of a challenging role Jean recalls: "...it used everything I had as a human being and as an actor...". During subsequent performances she notes: "...the preparation during the day is very hard, something inside you
prepares all day long (for performance)". Whether it is preparation during rehearsal or before a performance, Jean describes the necessary involvement of an actor’s total being: "...boy do you have to put your body through an awful lot to ‘get there’ because it's an almost athletic experience spiritually, emotionally, and physically to act". This athletic experience becomes more demanding as time goes on as "...you become more and more demanding that it become more and more specific about what you're doing...". Kathy echoes this sense that, as actors gain greater experience, they become increasingly demanding of themselves and, as well, over time the cumulative cost of previous and numerous character portrayals begins to catch up to the actor: "...Now I think, oh God I don't want to do this (part), I don't want to hurt, because it hurts more, it costs more. I think as you get older it costs more". As a result, actors become increasingly selective regarding the characters they are willing to portray: "I choose my parts more and more carefully because it costs me more everytime to go this journey, because you must begin at the beginning every time" (Jean). John suggests actors need to first think about what is involved in playing a character and then choose whether to continue: "...if you want to go into that territory, that's the thing you have to think of, maybe you don't want to go into that type of territory...". Using images similar to John's idea of "territory", Jean describes picking and choosing what, "...words, what dark places, what struggles (she) was prepared to do again".

Despite the personal cost of numerous characterizations, actors voice a deep sense of commitment and responsibility to the roles they temporarily occupy. Natalie describes the sense of responsibility and even protectiveness actors can feel toward their characters: "...you are wearing the mantle of the character. You take possession of that character and you become very territorial...it's up to you to guard with great ferocity certain elements of that character...if somebody throws you a curve ball and it's not right, it can send you in a direction that is completely wrong, you have to be very, very responsible...you have to weigh it all up and be very prepared to be responsibly defensive of your character...". To Jean, playing a character who is based on a live or historical figure requires a higher level of commitment: "...there's a greater responsibility when you act when you're taking the fabric of a real person's life". Later she adds: "...I think when you deal with people that have been real people that they affect you more, that you have a greater responsibility so you dig a little deeper...". For Darlene, commitment to a character means believing in the character's world even if that world is beyond anything she has ever
encountered: "... (I) thought, she's crazy, how am I going to play this woman?...I just trusted and thought, OK I will believe her, I'll believe that this is the way it is for her, absolutely believe in it in every instance". In believing in her characters, Darlene expresses satisfaction in being able to give them "integrity" and believes that without such commitment, "...you're cheating your character, they're stillborn...".

Several actors comment directly on the central presence of commitment in acting: "There's the temptation to quit... but what keeps you going is your commitment...you've got to do it and there's no turning back" (Sarah). For Natalie, commitment to and respect for characters are interrelated: "...I have great respect and great regard and great empathy for all these people...". Darlene clearly states the necessity for a deep level of dedication in acting: "It's a real commitment; you have to commit to the person you're playing. I really have so much respect for them, you have to".

Actors demonstrate not only a commitment to their characters but to their audiences as well, expressing a desire to live up to their expectations, treat them with respect, and to remain aware of the way in which they are being impacted. Sometimes it is the existence of audiences that keeps an actor going: "I don't know what it is that kept me together, I suppose the fear of knowing that there's going to be one hundred and fifty people looking at your stuff in four days...you can't just bail out so you'd better get it together..." (Victoria). For Natalie, respect for the audience is akin to a kind of sacred trust; she is responsible for ensuring the emotional safety of those for whom she performs: "...you can't make them get in touch with their pink part or their underbelly (vulnerability) unless they feel that you're not going to hurt them in the process more, so they have to feel absolutely confident that they are in the hands of somebody who knows exactly what they're doing. I have to be more vulnerable and more pained than they are in my character's history so that they can still have that safety net...". For Darlene, respect for the audience leads her to be true to the character: "...the only way I couldn't insult my audience was if I got totally behind it (the character) and did it with as much power as I could...". Sam, out of respect for audiences, sees characterization as something that should be offered and not forced upon them: "...it needs to be approached in such a way that's honest, so you're helping as opposed to imposing". Evoking emotional responses within an audience is also something which some actors feel should be carefully managed. Natalie experienced satisfaction in frightening her audience because that was what she felt she
needed to do to convey the painful life of the character. Darlene describes the importance of actors not taking their own personal responses and emotions too far onstage because, "...then you frighten the audience and they're afraid for you and they're out of the play then...". In this second example, evoking fear is neither desired nor healthy for the audience. In one instance, in which Jean felt she was having to experience not only the character but the problems and issues of the playwright as well, she recalls "taking on" these unresolved "demons" within the play and trying to protect the audience, thereby giving them a performance which would protect their well-being and convey what was most important. Jean concludes that the audience benefitted, though she bore a heavy burden: "People who stuck with it seemed to be cleansed by it and that's because I believe as the artist I was helping them get by the demons and keeping them to myself...I was giving them the 'other' as much as I could so I was doubling up on my job".

Whether directed toward character, audience or the acting profession itself, commitment and respect are qualities which act as driving forces behind actors' search for truthful characterizations, and often sustain actors in times of extreme challenge and difficulty.

Relevance of Dynamics of the Structure to Drama-Based Therapies

This section has focused on the dynamics of the structure, that is, the way in which the dialectic is accomplished and the factors essential to the dialectical process.

Psychodrama

A few of these factors can be related to Psychodrama, in particular, the importance of "significant" others present in both acting and therapeutic realms. The actors have the most to say about the role of the director; good directors can facilitate deeply meaningful experiences, draw out aspects of the actor, push actors to take risks, and ensure the safety of the experience. Similarly in Psychodrama the director guides the therapeutic process and facilitates the involvement of all the players. Ensuring the emotional safety of the group also falls under the director/therapists's responsibilities. Actors who describe negative encounters with directors attest to the potential damage and destruction this influential role can cause. Actors describe being misguided, losing self confidence, and experiencing the fear of risking within a role without sufficient support and expertise from the director. Directors often decide who is suited to play a role and, in some instances, can limit an actor's range of experience and reinforce actors' limitations. It is
beneficial to consider these possible dangers concerning the director's role in Psychodrama, as insufficient experience or misguided understandings of the director's role might lead to negative and destructive experiences for the participants. It would seem that building self confidence, assisting individuals to discover solutions to difficulties for themselves, expanding an individual's range of experience and perceived limitations, and providing a safe environment in which to experiment and risk, would be important elements in Psychodrama, as supported by the painful experiences of actors when such elements were not present.

With Psychodrama's strong emphasis on interpersonal interactions and with the concept of self emerging from roles played in relation to others, the importance actors place on their relationships with fellow actors and audiences are relevant and related. Actors attest to the difficulties experienced when conflicts exist among fellow actors, as interaction and interdependence are inherent and fundamental elements involved in the acting process. As in Psychodrama, the players cannot effectively function without each other. In Psychodrama audiences are distinguished from theatre audiences by their greater involvement and participation. However, while actors and audiences are clearly separated in the theatre it is interesting that actors emphasize the importance of their relationship with their audiences, citing that they are deeply affected by audiences' responses and see them as powerful teachers and sources of feedback and support. It is a sensitive, dynamic relationship critical to an actor's success. Similarly, in Psychodrama the audience shares in the experiences of the protagonist, offering support and feedback which serve to deepen and enrich the protagonist's experience. Actors describe the whole "environment" in acting as crucial, with timing, trust, good feedback, safety, and faith in the people involved and in the process, as essential components. These qualities can be easily related to the equally important environment necessary in Psychodrama.

Another factor which emerges as essential in the acting process, which can be related to Psychodrama, is that of risk. Actors describe feelings of anxiety, fear, and vulnerability as frequently experienced enroute to forming and performing a character. In Psychodrama individuals enact scenes which represent their own lives and relationships with the involvement, and under the observation of, fellow group members. In both realms individuals are revealing themselves to others. As well, whether one is developing a character or expanding one's own role repertoire, risk is often involved in moving
beyond comfortable and familiar confines. One actor described a transcendent and personally transformational experience in which enormous risk and vulnerability and the necessity to open up oneself to new possibilities were combined with sound directoral guidance and a good rehearsal process which provided preparation and extensive exploration in a safe setting. Again, these ingredients can be related to Psychodrama's efforts to expand the role repertoire and experience of clients. As in Psychodrama, some actors advocate a de-emphasis on over intellectualization and analysis and, instead, support a spirit of experimentation and risk in which new and different ideas emerge. Risk, anxiety, and vulnerability appear to be inherent elements in both successful acting and effective Psychodramas, and while they may create internal upheaval for actors and clients, they lay the groundwork from which discovery, inspiration, and learning arise.

**Drama Therapy**

In Drama Therapy, like Psychodrama, group interaction is very important as individuals engage in improvisational exercises and other dramatic activities. It is the way in which individuals interact with others, in fact, which serves as information to the therapist and provides clues as to areas of difficulty. As in acting, then, breakdowns in effective group interaction and functioning indicate problems which need to be addressed in order to achieve successful results, whether these results be portraying a character effectively or improving interaction within a therapeutic improvisational exercise. The drama therapist selects techniques based on gathered information and observations regarding, for example, whether an individual tends to over or under distance. It is therefore very possible that therapists can greatly influence the therapeutic process and can either facilitate deeply meaningful and enlightening experiences or reduce self confidence, misguide clients, or force them to risk without sufficient support and emotional safety. As has been mentioned, experiences of actors indicate both potential rewards and negative consequences depending on the effectiveness of those who are in directoral roles.

The theme of risk which emerges in actors' descriptions of the acting process also relates to Drama Therapy's emphasis on spontaneity and the use of unstructured exercises which allow aspects of the self to emerge. When faced with a lack of structure, risk is increased and individuals will often choose familiar responses which lower anxieties. Such responses which inhibit free expression become the focus for exploration, as it is in a necessary state of free expression and spontaneity that an individual is opened
up to new possibilities and unconscious material can emerge to be expressed in symbolic and dramatic forms. Similarly, in theatre actors espouse the willingness to risk and sustain anxiety as this leads to true experimentation and new discoveries so central to creating a rich and living character. In both realms discovery, inspiration, and learning can arise out of those experiences which promote emotional risk taking, experimentation, and spontaneity in, of course, sufficiently safe settings. Actors attest to the rewards of being able to let go of rigid controls and set methods, much as drama therapists believe that over-distanced individuals who cling to rigid boundaries, limited role repertoires, prescribed styles of functioning, and purely intellectualized thinking, require experiences in under-distancing to foster creativity, spontaneity, and openness which, albeit unnerving and risky, lead to growth and the discovery of new role opportunities.

**Fixed-Role Therapy**

A fair number of factors actors identify as being important to character development can be related to Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) as this therapy involves the actual portrayal of a character different from oneself. Similar to Psychodrama, Drama Therapy, and acting, "significant others" impact the process of FRT. As the director greatly influences the direction of a given play and the characterizations which make up that creation, a therapist influences the direction of FRT through assessing the client's situation, creating the new fixed-role sketch, rehearsing that role with the client, and then assisting the client in assessing the outcomes. Following George Kelly's scientific metaphor, the therapist acts as a co-researcher, providing clients with experiences and allowing them to construe those experiences for themselves. Respecting the dignity of the person and the truth which is inherent in a person's own unique construction of reality, can be related to the experiences of some actors in which good directors facilitated insightful and meaningful experiences, drew out inner aspects of the actor, helped actors to see new elements of themselves, fostered a safe and supportive environment conducive to experimentation, offered alternative perspectives, and acted as a kind of "tour guide". All these which actors found conducive to character development are qualities which also foster the respect FRT emphasizes. Fixed-role therapists can benefit from noting that which appears to lead to positive character development as well as those elements actors did not find helpful, such as critical approaches which reduced self confidence, being forced to risk without sufficient preparation, support or a sense of emotional safety, and having one's
range of experience reduced by only being encouraged to play roles which reinforce limitations or restricted views of oneself. In both acting and FRT respect for the individual, which involves allowing individuals to explore and express their own creativity within a role, promotes successful results.

In FRT the fellow players and audiences are found in a client's own life. While in theatre the actor engages in creating characters with other actors doing the same, with the later addition of audiences which guide and impact performances, in FRT the client and therapist rehearse the new role so the individual can "perform" it with significant people in his or her own life. In both settings the relationships between self and others are dynamic, impact the whole process, and are enormously important in the determining the success of characterizations. In both instances lack of support, resistance, or conflict in these relationships can threaten and challenge an individual in developing and sustaining a character enactment. In contrast, actors also attest to the enormous benefits of receiving support and validation from peers and audiences. As one actor relayed, when playing a particularly difficult character she felt enormous validation from the audiences who were witnesses to the pain and suffering experienced by the character. As these emotions happened to parallel this actor's own experiences she personally experienced a sense of support from the audience and felt they were "there for her" which gave her enormous strength in trying and challenging circumstances. In FRT the support or resistance a client receives from significant others in response to a new role will affect that individual's ability to carry the role enactment through to completion. It is this support or lack thereof that must be addressed, much as an actor and director must address why there is conflict amongst a cast or why audiences are not responding favourably to characterizations.

A final "significant other" found in theatre is that of the playwright. As has been mentioned, in FRT the therapist and sometimes the client as well are the playwrights or creators of the character sketch. There is no play, no detailed plot or crafted interactions and relationships. Actors describe the joy found in playing a character that has been well written, in which good background information to the role's personality and behaviour has been given, and which offers rich ideas, thoughts, and feelings through rewarding and carefully crafted lines. FRT involves what could be called a character description and the plot or sequence of events unfolds in the client's own life as the role is carried out. The impact of effective writing on actors, however, can offer "food for thought" to fixed-role therapists as the quality of
descriptions and the words which are used can influence the ease with which a role is enacted. In fact, without the backdrop of a play and the rich, informative writing from which to draw, the FRT sketch needs to somehow capture a level of depth and vitality that will make the character real, interesting, and understandable to the client. Clues are not taken from a script but are drawn from the life of the client. This does have an advantage in that the client is not bound or restricted by a playwright's intentions or limitations. A goal for FRT might be to maintain the freedom and appropriateness inherent in creating roles suited to the individual client, while seeking to invest the character sketch with some of the depth and richness actors enjoy in playing roles written by playwrights.

Another factor important to the acting process is that of gathering information from various sources of knowledge, a factor which has value for FRT. In describing personal experiences, actors identify the formation of a character through "digging inside oneself", that is, utilizing inner knowledge, discovering inner emotions which then require expansion in order to create the character, and the development of a comprehensive background of the character. In FRT it is, of course, essential that the new character be based on the inner life of the client. However, beyond simply basing the new role upon the problems and areas of difficulty that the therapist has identified, it might be important for the client to have a strong hand in the creation of the character and to create it in such a way that it challenges the client's difficulties while also drawing upon the client's inner knowledge and resources so that such qualities are strengthened, affirmed, and solidified. Similarly, it may be valuable to determine, much as some actors do, what qualities are desired for the new role, such as courage and assertiveness for example, and how the client might expand them to fill the role demands.

Another source of information is research and observation. Like actors, clients and even therapists in FRT may not have all the information needed to construct a role sketch. Actors speak of the necessity of looking to the outside world for images, ideas, behaviours, and general clues into human nature. Observing others can be a central part of this research. In FRT as a preamble to creating a character it may be valuable for a client to research, observe, and become aware of behaviours, forms of interaction, and qualities which others possess which might be desirable but currently out of the realm of a client's experience. From such information greater complexity and direction may be given to the FRT sketch. A final source of information is that of accumulated experience. For actors the ever-increasing repository of
characters from which to draw serves as a source of information for future use. This can be linked to FRT's core objective of role expansion. In trying on new roles within FRT the client, similar to an actor, might accumulate experience and information upon which to draw in the future. The forming of many roles and the creation of many constructs adds to an inner repository similar to that of an actor who has performed many characters.

Risk is yet another factor which is important to both actors in theatre and clients in FRT. George Kelly frequently refers to the experimental nature of FRT, that the role sketch is to be a temporary "trying on" which offers the opportunity to experiment with new ways of being. Feelings of risk, anxiety, uncertainty, doubt, vulnerability, and fear, all emotions experienced at times by actors, might be experienced by clients attempting to play a new role within their daily lives. Kelly, himself, acknowledges that it is anxiety that leads a client into therapy as anxiety is experienced when constructs are no longer effective in predicting and managing events. Anxiety, as he notes, is not unhealthy but is instead a signal or clue that change is necessary. Similarly, in theatre fear, anxiety, and vulnerability can be inherent elements involved in creating a character and, rather than being unhealthy, can be translated into challenge. In both acting and FRT a willingness to risk and experiment opens up new and different possibilities. However, for both actors and clients of FRT, the environment within which they are risking is crucial. Kelly speaks of the importance of an "invitational mood" in which the client is free to entertain new propositions. As well, the context of experimentation in which the client is only "trying on" a character for a short period of time is intended to foster a sense of freedom and willingness to take some risks as the client is not "locked in" or being pressured to "become" the role sketch. In theatre the rehearsal process is ideally intended to prepare actors for the exposure and pressure found in performance. Similarly, it is crucial that rehearsals in FRT prepare clients for "performances" or important interactions in real life. The breadth and depth of the rehearsal time will lessen the level of anxiety and fear, though both clients and actors must be reassured that such feelings to some degree are normal and to be expected.

A final factor present in the acting process is that of commitment. Actors speak of seeking the reality and depth of the character in order to play it with the utmost truth and integrity. As there is no room for pretense, actors often must confront that which the character is facing and bring their own
emotions and understanding to the character. Actors also speak of a sense of responsibility toward the character which involves protecting it, guarding its integrity, and even "taking possession" of it. Commitment goes beyond one's character to include audiences as well and actors are sometimes sustained through difficult and often grueling acting experiences because of the anticipation of an expectant audience. It is interesting to consider the role of commitment in FRT. In FRT, as in acting, it is desirable for the client to play the role with truth and commitment. Initial doubt and uncertainty must give way to some level of engagement in continuing the process through to the end of the enactment period. Without the clear sense of responsibility to a waiting audience or to the playwright's intentions, the FRT process may need to address and foster commitment but, in this case, to oneself. It is not easy to take a new role into a life fraught with established relationships, familiar patterns, and routine interactions, even if they are problematic to begin with. Commitment to oneself is essential and perhaps, with a sufficiently "alive" and believable character the client may be able to commit to this new and experimental entity as well.
4. Outcome of the Process

In section two the structure of the dialectic between actor and character was explored, followed by the process of the dialectic in section three which included the factors of crucial importance to character formation. As a natural progression, this section will focus on the outcome of the dialectical process and the ways in which actors have been affected or impacted by their experiences. This will be divided into two main sections with the first concerning itself with experiences of personal progression, that is, general ways in which actors describe being affected by characters they have played, and the second involving a review of experiences of life drama and how characters played have combined with the historical contexts of actors' lives to yield personally powerful experiences for the actors.

Experiences of Personal Progression

Actors vary in levels of awareness when it comes to reflecting upon and articulating the outcomes of their experiences. For some, the completion of playing a character signifies an end of one experience and they then move on to the next without significant pause or contemplation. At the other end of the spectrum other actors describe in detail personal effects of some and even most of their acting experiences. Some actors experience immediate insights or realizations concerning the impact of a particular performance; others describe the necessity of time and distance from the experience in order to assess the nature of that experience. In playing a very disturbed character, Sam describes personal awareness as coming after the acting experience: "...at the time, the blankness of the character's mind and what the play required meant that I could not think about it a lot...it was not until afterwards that I started to become aware of changes". Victoria echoes this with a similar statement: "I think it's like any therapeutic or psychological journey; when you're in it you're not seeing what the changes inside you are and the patterns and the learning and when you stop and look back you can see". The comments of actors who are able to reflect upon and articulate their experiences will be focused upon and framed within a number of following themes.

Psychological Investigation

For some actors, the attraction to and reward of playing a particular character are found in the nature of the psychological insights revealed. Whether it is insights into human nature or into the human condition, the actor enjoys a sense of increased knowledge and understanding about life through exploring
the mind and world of the character. Natalie is clear regarding the importance of this exploration: "...the major attraction for me in terms of acting is the psychological investigation that goes along with the characters that I play". Later she adds: "...the characters that come to my mind as an actor are the roles that give me insight into human nature.". Victoria gains particular pleasure in discovering the reasons and motivations for behaviours strange and foreign to her: "You gain a lot of insight into human nature, that's what acting is, it's imitating human nature and human nature seems so illogical but it always stems from something...the villain in his own mind is never the villain, it's just no-one understands him, so you gain insight into how people think and why they think a certain way...there are reasons people do the things they do and you learn about that in acting...and that's the fascinating part cause human nature is quite weird and fascinating but there's always a reason for somebody's behaviour". John holds a similar curiosity in discovering how other people make sense of the world: "That's what interests me, to be able to get into someone else's shoes and think how that works. You've got to get inside and rumble around".

Actors give specific instances in which they have gained significant psychological insights from characters they played. For Natalie, playing a deeply unhappy child yielded insights into depths of pain she had never known before: "...(this character) gave me insight into disturbed kids...I understood what it must be like to be so badly, spiritually, and emotionally and mentally abused all the time...". In another instance new understandings emerged for Natalie from the brilliance of the writing: "The insights into human nature through this role specifically have been probably greater than many roles that I've played along the way because the writing is so clever, it's so psychologically rich". In contemplating the playing of a formidable character Natalie anticipated exploring the nature of social status: "...it's an interesting examination of power and justice, and it's going to be an examination for me about how one, with that kind of hierarchical position, can alienate...So I'm excited by that". A fourth character for Natalie afforded her new understanding of sex roles in society: "(this character) is a really extraordinary character to play from a psychological point of view because you constantly appreciate that women are always putting themselves second". In playing the disturbing character of a rapist, Sam recalls that this role, "...was a turning point for (him) in being able to understand women's fear...".

Through characters, actors are able to step into the minds and lives of others, to examine and experience the emotions, thoughts, and behaviours of other people. Through these rare opportunities they
gain insights and new forms of understanding into human nature they might never otherwise obtain, insights which can expand and enrich their ability to empathize with others, perceive the diversity and complexities of those around them, and maintain an open-minded approach and ever-expanding scope concerning human life and experience.

**Discovery**

Actors describe instances in which, through characters, they discover previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of themselves and have the opportunity to examine their own inner lives in new and different ways. Deborah describes a kind of fateful coming together of actor and character: "...there's a kind of synchronicity in the lives of actors; you tend to get challenges that are in fact connected with things in your own life...I think most actors would say they've had unusual opportunities to investigate in a role certain things that are of recent and current interest in their lives". While characters serve as a means to examine issues from an actor's own life, they also serve as an object of comparison; actors discover elements within themselves through transferring the character's life to their own: "...(one character) for instance, expresses, finally, shame at what she has not done with her life...it can't help but make me sort of constantly think about that in terms of my own life...". In other instances actors describe direct comparisons between themselves and the characters: "...it's like, for example, looking at a character and saying (she) reacted to that situation that way in the script and you can think how would I do that..." (Victoria). In describing the outcomes of playing certain characters Victoria adds: "...you can always have something very very positive, always; in terms of a really personal thing, though you know whether or not you like that character, like if you meet that person whether those values and morals and philosophies of that person are ones you would ever want to have or take on...". Thus actors are, in a sense, able to test themselves against the characters they play which can further define their own understanding of themselves, their likes and dislikes, values and beliefs. Characters can either cause actors to examine certain parallel or related issues within their own lives or, through direct comparison, can cause actors to accept or reject certain aspects of the character, thereby further defining their own self-identities.

Through the playing of characters actors also discover abilities and capabilities within themselves of which they had previously been unaware. When an actress became ill and Darlene, as understudy, had to
fill the role on very short notice, she recalls with amazement how she was able meet the challenge in a way she had never dreamed possible: "...our minds, or brains, are so extraordinary that when we are under phenomenal pressure we will perform...what was happening was all of the actor's instincts took over and provided me with all the adrenalin I needed to just function and survive...So I really sense and feel that we have these peak experiences when you can no longer say, oh I can't do that". Later Darlene adds: "...having to go through with all that happened gave me a great sense of achievement and understanding about my own capabilities". In playing a very old man at a very young age Sam recalls: "...it was a three and a half hour transformation process so that when I went on stage it was just a continuation of what I already was as opposed to a moment of transformation...I was able to become old so I knew how to do this and I thought maybe I could make a living at it...it was a transformational experience in terms of my own abilities and thoughts about who I was...". Performing in a play which dealt with very difficult and painful life issues caused Jean to re-assess her own inner resources: "...it taught me things about what my capacity is, what I can do and what I can't do...I have to look carefully at the journey I have to take, at what I have to give life to". In contrast, Darlene describes a deeply satisfying experience which revealed newly found capabilities: "...it was an extraordinarily beautiful and rewarding experience... rewarding because it showed me what I could do". For John, it was a relationship with a director which served as a catalyst to releasing untapped inner potential: "...we were able to work together to flesh out that character and he was able to bring that other stuff out of me that I thought I would never be able to get out...Parts that I didn't know that I could fulfill...there was always something coming out that was good...". As a result of playing roles, then, actors are able to learn of their own strengths and limitations, and often discover whole new capabilities within themselves.

For some actors, the playing of characters has facilitated a very deep exploration of their lives. Victoria describes an experience in which a play, based on her own life, forced her to face major personal issues: "...it was a life changing experience for me in that it forced me to start to examine a lot of facets of me as a person...". While the experience of exposing intimate details of her life onstage was terrifying, the result was that Victoria continued on with the process started by this experience: "...I went into therapy afterwards and it was all triggered by this show...I grew and I don't think I would have grown without the pain". In confronting her own personal issues so profoundly through the character, Victoria felt
compelled to complete what she had, unwittingly, begun. As a result she sought the means to deal with her difficulties and felt freed of the emotional problems which, during the production, threatened to engulf her. She describes visual images which represent her initial experience and later recovery: "(initially) I would have painted me lying on the ground with this great giant weight and I'd be very small under this huge weight trying to crush me. Now I don't feel like that at all, now I'm holding it". Victoria not only achieved greater relief in her personal life but also felt she could return to the same role again with less turmoil and greater understanding: "...now that I've done it I don't think I'll let it happen the same way again because I have now all the information as to why I went through the process I went through...if we do the show again I feel I can go even further because I won't be afraid of holding back...". For Victoria, a deeply personal role caused her to discover inner recesses of pain and unresolved issues. The experiencing of these issues as the character led her to deal with them in her own life, ultimately increasing her peace of mind and sense of confidence in being to return to the stage with that same role in the future. Natalie also acknowledges the power of characters in facilitating the discovery of inner pain and trauma: "...I was intrigued by the idea of how important it is for all of us...to be able to don the mask, cause it takes putting on the mask first of all you know, symbolic, to be able to go back to what it was like to be a child, cause really that's all it is, is the child's voice crying in all of us, and until you figure out what it is that hurt, where it all began, then you really don't know who you are now...". Both Victoria and Natalie identify the potential that portraying a character or "donning the mask" holds in enabling individuals to discover and explore their own inner lives. Often in seeking to portray a truthful character, actors reveal inner truths for themselves. Darlene concludes this theme with a general comment on acting: "...it's observations and dealing with issues and dealing with who you are...".

Expansion

In addition to describing experiences of inner discovery, actors also reveal instances in which their lives have been further enriched by characters they have played; they experience a sense of expansion as they move outside of known boundaries and come in contact with previously unknown territory. Rather than revealing what is existing and present within themselves, these experiences add or enrich the lives of the actors and take them in new directions. Darlene sees the opportunity for expansion as a central motivating factor for her work: "...if you can be another character you suddenly realize that it is possible
to experience other emotions that you would never normally have, it is possible to expand yourself beyond your parameters and I think that's the main reason I do what I do...". Playing roles which differ from or contrast with oneself seems to be a central element which leads to an expansive or enriching experience: "The characters that come to my mind as an actor are roles that give me insight into human nature that maybe I haven't had, and that would be about playing roles that are completely foreign to me...Those roles are great gifts because they make me have to delve into areas I would never have any occasion to delve into" (Natalie). Sam echoes this emphasis on playing roles different from oneself: "...I've gotten myself into situations that are just a little bit strange so that I can learn more so I enjoy doing characters that are unfamiliar to me...There's a play I did where each actor played nine characters...in one play you had to do so many different things from a whining child to a wise old man and so that's expansive.. I've enjoyed a lot things that are within my personality range but I certainly don't mind going outside". These actors reveal their enjoyment in experiencing lives and events previously beyond their known experience; the character acts as a vehicle which pushes actors beyond the boundaries of what they find familiar, known, and comfortable, with learning and increased understanding as the rewards. Often actors seek both commonalities and differences when playing characters, aspects with which they can both relate and from which they can learn: "...I think in everything I do there is something that is a part of me and something that is far away from me. (John). For Jean, the initial personal identification with the character can then lead directly to her experiencing of the new or foreign aspects the character has to offer; she encountered just such a combination while playing a character based on a famous individual: "...once I found that bridge to myself then I was able to do it in some terms and I could be exotic and glamorous and even beautiful in those terms, while I don't consider myself to be any of those things...".

Over the years as experiences accumulate, actors benefit from the vast array of characters they have played in different ways. For Darlene, her characters stay with her as comfortable companions: "They're like old friends, it's like I've had the priviledge of having many friends, they just happen to be inside of me, it's almost like being a multiple personality". Thus for Darlene the characters have extended not only her range of friends, but have expanded her own personality. In describing the search for that "something" which makes a role work, John identifies how experience is accumulated over time which increases what he as an actor is able to bring to a part: "In the beginning of acting you're not sure what
that 'something' is...and then later on in life you have an idea of what you want to bring to something (a role) when you come in...that's part of why you do a part...this is what I'm bringing in with me".

One actor interviewed identified instances in which characters could have offered learning opportunities and expanded understanding, both on personal and professional levels, but unfortunately such opportunities were never realized: "...this is the sadness of how one restricts oneself...I looked at that part and I thought I can play this, this, and this of her but of course all that sexuality and sensuality, I can't do that...the sad thing is that I probably did and that was the place where...things could have been explored so that yes, you can learn and understand that in fact you do have that, or there is something in you that is like that, and that would have been a very valuable thing for me to have learned..." (Kathy). According to this actress, it is clear that opportunities exist for increased learning and the discovery of inner potential through characters, but sadly such possibilities are not always realized.

For some actors added learning takes place through observation, research, and the gathering of new skills necessary to the playing of a new role. Actors gain increased understanding through observations of life around them: "You watch people on the bus to see if there's anybody on the bus that reminds you of the character you're playing. You're aware of things that you never saw before, you see couples having fights in restaurants and you spy on them"(Anthony). As well, actors learn through researching specific areas of life: "...I played a therapist, I'd never been to therapy, I had no idea what therapists do, so I went and sat in on a therapy session with a patient and doctor... it's when you get to do research like that that it's really interesting...You learn new skills, you don't normally have to learn skills like that in day to day life" (Victoria). In addition to specific skills, actors describe gaining deeper knowledge about emotions and human qualities; Victoria recalls playing the character of a pregnant woman who knew she was going to give birth to a severely handicapped child and yet faced this impending event with joy and anticipation: "I got to learn all the feelings around it but not have to really do it and I learned what it felt like to feel you have something inside of you that's so wonderful...I learned more about what's going on inside a human being that would make that selfless kind of thing happen". For Natalie, playing a particular character offered her the opportunity to explore the nature of courage: "...I hope that I listen to (this character's) voice all time and find some courage because I could do with some more courage, I could do with lots more courage...". Darlene echoes Natalie's interest in exploring the quality of inner strength
through the playing of a courageous character: "...I liked (the character's) spirit and her courage and I wanted to be that courageous, so it's nice to be able to play someone who has the courage you'd like to have - hopefully a little of it rubs off". Both Natalie and Darlene are conscious of qualities which they aspire to acquiring and, through inspirational characters, they see the opportunity to explore these qualities and possibly come closer to making them a reality for themselves. Characters also offer opportunities for actors to discover that there are ways of looking at or understanding situations which they had never contemplated before; limited, set concepts and ways in which things "must" be conceptualized, evaluated and acted upon can be challenged and stretched, as Darlene discovered through one acting experience: "...it was an extraordinarily beautiful and rewarding experience...rewarding because it showed me that there are other ways of doing things, other ways of finding the truth".

In revealing the ways in which personal "expansion" takes place, it appears that actors experience a general feeling of enrichment in playing characters, a sense that something has been added to their lives that was not there before: "...there's always something there in the end that's more than there was in the beginning" (John). For Natalie, the insights that arise from certain characters add to her emotional memory and she can return to them again in the future. She describes this concept through the use of striking images: "...it's like visiting a beautiful park or going to see a mountain or looking at a panoramic view of a place you've never seen before, it's always in there, you always say - oh, wasn't that wonderful, I remember what it felt like and what it smelt like when I was there and the time of day and I remember the mood of the place when I saw it - and that's always in there and you always recall it. I think that's a visual memory, and I think the same is true of our sensual memory and our emotional memory...". For Natalie, a fulfilling or rewarding experience is never gone but is stored, enriching one's inner memory, to be recalled when needed or desired again. Jean describes both characters which "deplete" and those which "enrich" the actor. Concerning characters that enrich she states: "...life is added to you because you've done this; because you've stayed brave enough and because you've taken as real a path as you can, you are able to experience the life of this person...". Later Jean adds: "Certainly to deal with the very great spirits of the world, to have to play them, affects and enriches your life and certainly to deal with a great play or a great work of art enriches you...I do absolutely know that my life changes with playing it...".

Whether exploring new areas, learning new skills or experiencing general enrichment of life, actors
clearly profess a belief that playing characters provides expansive experiences which add understanding and insights not previously present.

Expression

Because actors are playing characters which possess thoughts, behaviours, and emotions, the opportunity exists for actors, in a sense, to experience their own emotions through those of the characters. In addition to having access to a form of emotional catharsis, actors also, through personally connecting with characters, are able to express aspects of their own inner selves.

Victoria describes the release she experienced in playing a character which happened to offer an emotional outlet for her own painful feelings: "I had a relationship that broke up...at the time it was very heavy and I was in a perfect play because it was heavy and I could cry and dump and it was easy and actually very therapeutic to have that outlet everyday...it's cathartic and purging...so when the play is done and I've used all this personal stuff, I feel like I'm done with it. I'm not saying it is therapy and I don't like it when actors use it that way...but you can certainly help yourself". Anthony also identifies the indirect benefits of performing characters in which actors are able to emotionally express and purge their own emotions: "...it's a medium to express your emotions in, that's what actors get to do, they get to blow their brains out emotionally, they get to laugh and scream and cry...it's like every night you get to go through this huge emotional upheaval and it vents stuff for you personally so that afterward you feel pretty good...you've just had this incredible tantrum, you've wept, you've screamed at people ...and it's like this incredible release that you get to go through...you get to do things you would never get to do". Anthony later adds: "You see plays...they always involve a great culmination, there's a dramatic climax and it's not the kind of thing that happens to everybody every day of their life...if you're an actor you get to have it every night...and that can be a healthy thing". As Anthony recognizes, theatre often consists of intensified emotions, condensed into a short time period on stage, with a structure that allows for heightened expression and some form of resolution, all qualities which day to day living often lacks. Anthony recalls a specific instance in which he expressed enormously intense emotions through playing an angry and volatile character: "The whole thing was a rage, from the moment I walked on stage until the moment I left I was just in a rage and if I wasn't raging I was weeping...it was the greatest release to just rage like that". In playing a woman leaving her husband, Sarah recalls the enjoyment she
experienced in playing a woman who stood up for her own freedom: "...the differences allow you to keep it at arms length but the pleasure is in being able to express those feelings of wanting to break free and all that...it feels really good...". Darlene remembers playing a young and courageous woman and the joy she felt in expressing emotions of such depth and breadth: "She was a very independent, very bright, very loving, very emotional woman...she ran through the gamut of feelings, she expressed it all. It was an opportunity to run through a field, barefoot, and really love it...I knew all the things she was feeling and you just want to do them, you want to feel them, you want to do them and let them happen". Here Darlene identifies how a character can help an actor to get in touch with their emotional selves, as well as provide opportunities for the expression of such feelings. Actors, by nature of their work, come in contact with a wealth of characters who offer a vast array of emotional experiences. As Darlene concludes: "I feel so fortunate because as actors we are allowed to release so much more...".

Actors seem to derive much satisfaction from playing characters which reflect or bring forth aspects of the actors themselves or possess qualities the actors would like to experience and express. For John, playing a particular "tremendous, boisterous character, with beautiful poetry and prose", who was "bigger than life" was enormously attractive to him and when the offer came to play this classic role and come in contact with the qualities he found so appealing, he describes his feelings as being like that of a child: "...it's like a little kid going into a candy shop and not being able to afford or not being able to get any and suddenly one day the guy says, here take your pick...". For Darlene, the role of a young and expressive woman offered the opportunity for her to move a little closer herself to resembling a character of such beauty and courage: "...I had fallen in love with this role...I had been waiting to be this person that I had always wanted to be...". For Natalie, playing an eccentric character who maintains wisdom and a sense of self worth despite the disdain of others, allowed her to acknowledge and appreciate similar qualities within herself: "...the things she said were wonderful...I've always been attracted to anything that is different, by virtue of the courage it takes to be different, and she was the person everybody laughed at...but she knew, you know, so I mean there's all sorts of parallels there between (myself) and (that character)...". In playing a woman facing the loss of her career as an artist, Kathy came in touch with the enormous importance her own art holds for her: "...that was a very emotional thing when I read the play because there was a kind of feeling about that and a recognition in the play that yes...I'm only something
or someone when I do this, so I know that that certainly penetrated and I thought about it for a long time". Later Kathy adds: "(the play) was almost like a personal expression of what I really feel about myself and my work".

While the vast majority of comments made by actors outline the rewards and benefits regarding the expressive nature of their work, a few actors note instances in which characters facilitated emotional expression which was neither beneficial nor rewarding to the actor. In playing a rape victim Victoria recalls allowing feelings to surface which would assist her in truthfully playing the character; unfortunately she found such emotions deeply distressing: "It really affected me, I was having really heavy depression states...". For Jean, drawing upon her own inner self in order to bring integrity and reality to the character in one particular instance led to a depletion rather than an enriching of her own emotional resources: "...I was so deeply bruised inside dragging up this stuff to play the character...I couldn't deal with the inner stuff that I would have to deal with to do (this playwright) again...". In addition to bringing forth unwanted emotional experiences, sometimes it is difficult for the actor to dissolve those emotions once a character is finished with: "When you click on an emotional thing it's not like a machine...sometimes as an actor you press certain buttons to get an effect, to take you some place, and then sometimes we do that to ourselves, and those emotional buttons are not that easy to turn off sometimes" (John).

Overall, however, actors seem to deeply appreciate the opportunity characters give them to express a wider range of emotions and experiences, to come in contact with qualities they find inspiring and compelling, and to get in touch with, and express, inner aspects of themselves.

The Safety Factor

One crucial factor in facilitating discovery, expansion, and expression is the inherent safety involved in playing someone other than oneself. Actors often comment on the freedom, security, and almost limitless possibilities which exist in being able to execute actions which carry few or no real life consequences. Through characters, actors gain experiences they never thought possible. As Darlene graphically describes: "...I mean I kill people, I shot a man, I've been able to be and do wonderful things I would never have done...you do get taken to new heights and new depths, new lows". Victoria relates similar opportunities: "...there are tons of parts I've played where I've killed someone but have never done
that in my real life, so you do things that are outside your realm...". In echoing this idea Sam adds: "Just putting oneself in a situation where the consequences for the moment are quite real but knowing in the end you can go home and go to bed, you can murder someone, you can be angry, you can be loving, you can be all these things without real consequences...". It is possible, then, for actors to open themselves to new ideas and feelings and, through the protection of characters, feel free to experiment and explore experiences fully, knowing that real life consequences pose little or no threat. For Victoria this possibility is a reality: "Because it's not you, yes it's very safe, in fact it's so safe you can really go places in that safety net...". As a specific example Victoria recalls playing a particularly obnoxious character: "...I would certainly never behave the way she behaves, the things she says, the stuff she does, because that's not who I am, but since it's not me I could take it really far". Along with an elimination of consequences, characters also enable actors to experience the lives of many different people, again with the luxury of being able to leave these roles at the end of a production: "...it's an exhilarating profession...you can be all these other people" (Anthony). To Darlene, one of the most thrilling and rewarding aspects of portraying characters is, "...to be somebody else and discover that that too can be yours". In this comment Darlene reveals the reality that actors, in playing characters, can in fact "be" other people. With increased exposure to other ways of being actors are opened to new possibilities for themselves, ways in which they too can expand and even change their own self perceptions.

Actors also appreciate the safety of playing characters when having to appear in front of large groups of people. As Victoria discovered after playing a role based on her own life "...to go up on stage and talk to the audience as yourself is terrifying. If you can get up on stage and talk to the audience with the facade of some other character...it makes you think it's safe". John finds appearing in front of any group of people easier within the protection of a character: "...I have a hard time going in front of a large group of people, like students, and being myself...". For some, the safety of playing a character becomes so attractive that it is sometimes preferable to being oneself: "...I guess what I do is - I would prefer to be other people" (Darlene). This being said this same actress goes on to suggest that it is also possible to learn more about oneself through the freedom of playing other people: "...I would think sometimes, depending on who you're dealing with, they would feel safer and discover more by playing other
characters (as opposed to playing themselves)...you can fly, you can soar, you can be and discover so many parts of yourself...".

Through the safety of playing a character, actors are indirectly freed to explore new aspects of their inner selves which the characters bring forth; they can expand their own range of experience through playing many new and different personalities and are free to take these characterizations to any extreme required; and they are able to express the deepest personal emotions evoked in the process of portraying real and truthful characters.

Transfer to "Real Life"

While actors enjoy the benefits of acting during rehearsal and performance, they also describe ways in which acting experiences permeate their own lives away from the stage. The exposure to, as well as knowledge gained from, characters are carried over into actors' daily lives.

For Victoria, while she is involved in a production she feels the character's presence with her continuously: "That's not to say that if I was playing a woman with a limp and an accent that I'd walk around with a limp and an accent, but I would certainly walk around with all her philosophies and values and morals and I would have all of those in my body and personality for that duration, it just tends to bleed in". As Victoria also discovered, the presence of the character sometimes manifests itself through changes in her behaviour; while playing a gregarious and confident character, Victoria recalls that those close to her noted visible changes in her behaviour: "...I was at this party and this friend of mine said to me '(Victoria) you're different' and I know that that's what it was". Victoria does not see this fluidity and changeability of personality as negative or strange but, in fact, sees changes in behaviour in relation to particular settings as something most people engage in on an ongoing basis: "Everybody has their own characters, I'm sure at parties or with certain friends you can go into little personalities that are not really you. The ones you like tend to stay, the ones you don't like tend to get left behind". As an actor playing characters, Victoria simply comes in contact with more "little personalities" to test and either adopt or discard.

For other actors, the effects of characters they have played are felt long after they have ceased performing them. Natalie recalls utilizing the words of a character to assist her in communicating her own thoughts to her spouse: "...we were having a pretty damn good heated row and I was shouting
severely, and suddenly out came a quote, it just, I didn't have to reach for it, it was just there...it was relative to the situation that was bothering me in my domestic life...I called on (the character's) language...I used her to my advantage at that point because it was well written, it was good script, it was better language then I could, in my emotionally heated self, come up with". The words and the ideas of the character had been stored in Natalie's memory and, in a related real life circumstance, came forth to assist her in articulating her thoughts and feelings, giving her a greater capacity and ability to express herself. As Natalie, herself, says of the character: "...she just gives you more tools...it definitely gives you a vocabulary".

While Natalie's experience involved a specific instance, other actors have experienced far-reaching life changes as a result of playing a character. As Jean describes, some actors form intimate relationships in their personal lives as a result of feelings which characters evoke: "...a lot of people who played Romeo and Juliet opposite one another end up marrying for short or long periods of time, because this playwright goes so deeply, evokes that piece of yourself so deeply...". Darlene observes the same phenomenon: "It's one reason women marry the men they work with because they start to believe what's happening...it's hard not to make an identification...you create it as sure as you create the part you're playing". For some actors, then, the experience of playing certain characters can lead to life changing events.

Less extreme but no less powerful are experiences in which actors indirectly rehearse for real life events through the playing of characters. At times the exploration of lives and events which takes place in the development and performance of characters prepares actors for similar experiences in their own lives. Sarah recalls relating characters she has played to events which take place later in her own life:
"Something may happen to me in my life that had never happened to me before the play and I'll think, oh, this is how she felt...". In linking character and real life together, Sarah gains increased understanding of the experience in question. For Kathy, a scene in a play prepared her for a parallel scene in her own life:
"...I knew things sometimes in art before I knew them in life. For example, when I played (this character) in (this play), I was also married at this time in real life. The moment when I took off my wedding ring (in the play) was so very painful, and then I found when I left my own husband that yes, that was a very painful thing to do and I thought, how did I know that? But of course I already did...". Jean found herself playing a number of older characters dealing with death and sensed she was preparing herself for
something, though unsure as to what that something was: "I've played a woman, a mother dying of cancer four times now. And in doing that I don't know whether I'm preparing myself to go the same way...or whether I am, in doing this, holding a cross up and shielding myself against it". In another instance Jean was able to unequivocally identify the ways in which characters prepared her to confront the death of a dearly beloved life long friend. In remaining by the bedside of this dying woman Jean found herself able to face death with courage she had not had before: "Now I could not have done that, I don't think, if I hadn't played those things and faced death so many times that I knew it, and it was beautiful, (this friend) was beautiful to me. So I'm sure that's because of what I've done (onstage) that I was able to do that...I don't think I could be as healed as I am by her death if I hadn't been facing death in everything I've done because all these playwrights are trying to do it...I'm sure that I'm richer for these...". In this powerful example, Jean illustrates how playing characters can inadvertently prepare actors for real life events. Through characters actors can gain understanding of emotions, issues, relationships, and life events and, with this increased familiarity and practice, can be better prepared to face them in their own lives.

**Peak Experiences**

Though somewhat more difficult to define, actors describe instances in which they have encountered peak or transcendent experiences. Whether they are described as magical, spiritual, joyous, creative, or the "nights when God is with you", these experiences all seem to lift actors into a higher level of awareness and offer deeply meaningful and powerful opportunities for spiritual growth.

For Darlene, music is the key to creating freeing and joyous experiences: "...those peak experiences are rare I think, they happen more readily with music for me because music just lifts you right up and over into another area". She further elaborates: "...the things that have given me the most have been musicals because they have given me enormous joy and they have give me an enormous sense of lightness and a capacity to constantly reinvent my child and re-embrace that child...as a result of this enormous sense of well-being from experiencing the music and the freeing up of that joy, you can't help but learn something because you're totally open to it, you can't help but grow". In this description Darlene indicates that experiencing a sense of joy, feeling free to completely express oneself, and returning to a child-like state of openness and wonder, all create the conditions which lead to learning and inner growth.
In another instance Darlene describes a truly transcendent experience in which she felt the sense that a power of a higher nature took over a performance: "...I remember I hit the stage and I don't remember anything I did...I was in the balcony, I wasn't on stage and I was watching myself do this part...it was the best, the most, it was an amazing creative experience, a break-through, almost a religious experience in that there was the loss of this need to control...I've heard other actors describe the same thing, that the finest work they did was when they weren't doing it, when it was like it was out of body". Due to rehearsals, in which Darlene was "stripped of every piece of artifice" and, in terms of the character, "had gone so far with it", she emerged with a totally different kind of preparation for performance; one in which she was forced to rely on the rehearsal process and relinquish her usual control on stage. As a result she was open to the unusual and transcendent experience which took over. Darlene describes another instance in which a colleague, during rehearsal, was similarly forced to relinquish his usual, excessively strong control which resulted in a transformational experience: "...it released all this tyrannical, orthodox upbringing that he had and when he went through this almost demonic possession kind of thing and came out of it, it was like this cloud had lifted from his eyes; it was like he realized that yes he could feel something other than what he's supposed to feel". For this individual, being forced to relinquish usual and familiar ways of behaving and being challenged to consider other ways of perceiving the world caused a kind of trauma leading to revelation. Though a risky enterprise, this individual appears to have benefitted. Jean, similar to Darlene's "out of body experience, " describes performances in which the actor feels transported to a different realm: "...there are nights when the play takes over and the character takes over called 'the nights when God is with you', when you can't take a step wrong, you can't take a breath wrong, and it's almost as if you really have crossed over into this imaginary life and this is quite astonishing when this happens".

Actors also emphasize the importance of playing characters of inspiring courage and spirit. It is being able to temporarily inhabit such characters which provides meaningful and peak experiences for the actors. In playing an eccentric but courageous woman, Natalie deeply appreciates the depth and quality this character possessed: "(She)was not at all attractive but she had a great spirit, that's where her attraction was, she had this wonderful indomitable spirit and she was a lovely character to play". For Jean, it is the release of the spirit which must take place in a play, the release of the spirit of the character,
the actor and the audience. In inhabiting a particular character dying of cancer, which had been crafted in such a way that this release could not take place, Jean recalls the struggle her own spirit endured: "...I went the journey every night. The trouble was that there were unresolved demons in the script so I didn't have that release afterwards...it was really facing the cancer but not having the spiritual birth or release of the artist...". For Jean, while the actor must struggle with whatever pain or despair the character entails, the character must offer an experience of truth or integrity and the possibility for spiritual release in the end: "...the release of tragedy is pity and terror but having lived through it there is the release of the spirit". Later she adds: "...there has to be for me the spirit, the good...weaving the thing into a trapestry that is recognizable and has some beauty to it". The play, as well as the characters within it, can either facilitate or prevent actors from experiencing a connection with their own spiritual selves through offering or denying access to a character with inspirational qualities and spiritual depth.

Generally, actors strongly remember the peak or transcendent types of experiences they have encountered and these memorable events can maintain the actor's interest in their profession. As Darlene concludes: "...it's the magic that holds you there". While transcendent types of experiences can be rare, for some actors acting is a continual spiritual experience: "...there has always been a sense of personal importance about it, spiritual importance, this was important for me to do".

Professional Validation

As a final area of "Personal Progression", actors receive great satisfaction in doing their job well. As Anthony testifies: "For me the whole thing is being good at it". John also offers similar reasons for his career choice: "I do it because I'm good at it...".

Actors experience particular rewards from feeling they have truly captured the essence of the characters. Natalie's excitement is evident in her description of finding the central nature of the character: "...when you finally find the key and you open the right door and you go - bingo, this is it!...it's fabulous, you've found the key to the person you're playing, you've found the reason they function...And a whole history and a whole character, and a whole personality, and a whole way of walking falls like dominoes into place. It's marvelous". For Darlene, it was in performance that she truly realized what was truly happening to a particular character she was playing and was able to bring a satisfying sense of truth and honesty to the role "...she was this shattering glass - that's literally who she was - she shattered in slow
motion from the moment she stepped on stage and you just saw her come apart, and I was able to give her that integrity. As a result, Darlene concludes: "...it left me with a sense of accomplishment and a sense that I had an opportunity to live with this woman for several months and I really respect her...". In truly capturing the character onstage, actors are able to perform with the knowledge that they are truly fulfilling their function and offering something of worth: "...there's a sense of discovery; there's a sense that you have gone through a gestation period and you have given birth to something that's valuable" (Darlene).

Of course a major element in gauging the success of a characterization is the response from the audience. As Sarah states, characters have stood out for her "...more because of the impact the play had on the audience". Darlene takes great delight in discovering she has convincingly transformed into the character: "...I love it very much when other people come up and are amazed that it's me, it makes me feel really good". Sam enjoys seeing the pleasure he produces in others: "...I enjoy taking on characters, making them make sense, telling stories and jokes...I really enjoy watching people enjoying themselves and being a catalyst for that...". For Anthony, discovering he could cause feelings of enjoyment in others was a major personal discovery: "...it was a big thrill to find myself entertaining people and to find that it was working and that they were enjoying what I did, like I was special or something". Darlene recalls an instance in which, during a performance for school children, a young girl was so caught up in the world of the play that she came up onstage to help Darlene push an imaginary object. Later Darlene and the other actors were amazed by the teachers' emotional response to this event: "...the teachers were all in tears and they said that that little girl was an autistic child who had never ever responded to anything. This child was non-verbal, distraught, disruptive, did not participate and so she bought into this drama, she saw this invisible rock and so they discovered that the way to reach this child was through drama". Darlene experienced a deep sense of purpose and fulfillment in knowing her work could have that significant an affect on others. Natalie was also pleased at the impact she had on an audience, though in this case her intent was to convey the particular horror of the character's life: "I was really proud of her (the character) because I frightened the audience and that's what I wanted to do, that's what I had to do...".
Successfully portraying characters creates other various responses within actors. For Anthony completing a role can produce several feelings: "...you're left with - you're happy that you've been able to do your work, you take pride in your work, you're left with maybe a little more confidence...". For John, effectively playing a role despite doubts from others was very rewarding: "...it proved a lot to myself, that I could go beyond expectations". After being in the acting profession for many years, Jean discovered she was able to utilize her extensive experience in a new way. With her wealth of wisdom and knowledge she took personal and professional pride in being able to act as a mentor to younger actors: "...I think my value to my younger colleagues is often because they do confide in me...and the fact you are able to talk about anything, and then the fact that you're there and still smiling is of great importance to people". Jean's endurance and ability to empathize put her in the gratifying position of being a role model for those less experienced in the profession.

Actors experience great satisfaction in knowing they have discovered the essence of the character, have created the desired effect for the audience, and have gained greater confidence and assurance in their skills, in short, are secure in the knowledge that they have done a good job.

Relevance of Outcome of the Process to Drama Based Therapies

This section has focused on the experiences which have resulted from engaging in the actor/character dialectic. These outcomes can be related to the potential and desired outcomes of drama-based therapies. Psychodrama

Psychodrama shares some of the same outcomes as those experienced by actors, but differences also exist due to the contrasting approaches, one involving playing someone else and the other involving playing oneself. One outcome described by actors is that of psychological investigation which leads to insights into human nature and an increased knowledge and understanding of ways people think and behave. Through playing a different role the actors' abilities to empathize, accept complexity and diversity, and understand those different from themselves are expanded. In Psychodrama while the emphasis is not on the study of human nature but, instead, on a deeper understanding of the client's own self, it is feasible that a client gains greater understanding of others through some aspects of Psychodrama such as role reversal. In playing the role of another person the client may gain greater insights into the perspectives of others and may therefore reach greater resolution concerning those relationships.
The outcome of personal discovery described by actors certainly relates to Psychodrama as it is a goal of Psychodrama, through recreating scenes and relationships from one's own life, that resolution, learning and self knowledge occur. While actors discover previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of themselves due to playing different roles and in many cases use roles as objects of comparison to themselves, in Psychodrama clients examine their own world and play it out in a safe setting; roles are challenged, experimented with, and altered. Therefore, a possible result of both acting and Psychodrama is self discovery though means to that end differ.

The outcome of self expansion, again, is present in both realms but is different in nature due to contrasting approaches. In acting an actor's life can be expanded by playing roles new and different to himself or herself, something is added through a new character that has not been present before. In Psychodrama the client is also moving outside familiar confines and beyond what is known within the Psychodrama being played out. The goal of role expansion requires the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and experience possibly not familiar to or accessed before by the client. Therefore, again, acting and Psychodrama share the potential to facilitate inner expansion though the ways in which this is achieved contrast.

The outcome of expression strongly figures into Psychodrama. In acting actors value the opportunity to express inner aspects of themselves through roles. Actors are able to vent and release emotions, and roles which reflect or bring forth qualities the actor wishes to express are deeply satisfying to play. In Psychodrama catharsis plays a prominent role in facilitating therapeutic progress. The expression and release of powerful and possibly suppressed emotions leads to new understanding. Catharsis, which goes beyond simple expression, emerges out of spontaneity and immediacy and leads to the ultimate goals of new awarenesses, integration, and resolution. In both Psychodrama and acting, therefore, expression and emotional release are available and both clients and actors potentially experience benefits.

In acting, the inherent safety of playing someone other than oneself can lead to a sense of freedom, spontaneity, and a willingness to risk; actions carry no real life consequences and this protective quality can facilitate an openness to new possibilities and ideas. In Psychodrama this safety factor is just as important but is somewhat different in nature. While the protective quality of a differing role is not
present there is a similar safety in playing oneself within a supportive environment removed from daily reality. Actions, as in acting, can be carried out with no real life consequences and this potentially fosters a willingness to explore and experiment more freely. This safety element is essential to Psychodrama so that clients will feel receptive to the possibility of new and different role relationships. Whether it is developing a character in acting or expanding role repertoire in Psychodrama, the factor of emotional safety is essential to creating an environment conducive to exploration, experimentation, and discovery.

Actors describe experiences in which characters "transfer" in some form to their own lives away from the stage or long after the production has finished. Actors attest to the effects of characters lasting long after the performances have ceased. The ideas, words, and personalities can be stored for future use and some roles provide indirect rehearsals for real life events. In Psychodrama it is actually hoped that the therapeutic experiences of the players will continue on into real life and that the catharsis and insights gained will ripple through into daily interactions and relationships. Similar to acting, Psychodrama can also involve rehearsal and preparation which will hopefully ensure greater success in future life events and encounters.

Actors also relay peak or transcendent experiences as outcomes of playing characters, and describe the elements or qualities which accompany such experiences. They recall feeling joy and lightness, are lifted to a higher level of awareness, and feel free to truly express themselves. They describe a returning to a childlike state which fosters an openness to growth and learning. It is safe to say that these qualities and the possibility of transcendent experiences exist in Psychodrama. The spontaneity encouraged in Psychodrama can be compared to this childlike state of openness and receptivity and certainly the freedom to truly express oneself is fostered and encouraged. If in Psychodrama, as in acting, individuals are able to relinquish their usual control in a safe structure and are lifted to a higher level of awareness and self discovery, then the transcendent or peak experiences actors describe are likely available to participants of Psychodrama as well.

Drama Therapy

Links can also be found between the objectives of Drama Therapy and the outcome experiences described by actors. While actors identify psychological investigation as a valued outcome of the acting process, Drama Therapy, like Psychodrama, does not necessarily aim to facilitate the study of human
nature. Actors describe gaining insights into ways people think which expands their ability to empathize and accept diversity and differences, and fosters open mindedness towards others. In Drama Therapy it is interesting that the ability to construct people, events, and emotions as well as knowledge of a wide range of social roles and situations are important in reaching the goal of expanded role repertoires. Possessing a diverse knowledge of people and experiences would be beneficial to constructing roles in Drama Therapy and, as well, exercises in Drama Therapy may promote the increased understanding of previously unfamiliar thoughts, emotions, roles, and situations.

Concerning the outcome of discovery, actors describe discovering previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of themselves, through playing characters, including abilities and talents they did not know they had. In the case of one actor, for example, playing a character caused her to connect with unresolved personal issues and triggered a deep exploration of her life. Self discovery is a central objective in Drama Therapy. In using loosely structured techniques and vague situations it is hoped that aspects of the self will naturally emerge. An improvisational exercise becomes a kind of projective technique in which unconscious material is expressed in symbolic form. In looking for impasses or difficulties in improvisational style and spontaneity, the therapist and client are alerted to areas of difficulty which need to be explored with the ultimate outcome being discovery and insight.

Actors describe expansive and enriching experiences emerging from encounters with characters which have caused them to move outside of known boundaries and discover new territory. They identify benefits arising from the array and accumulation of many roles over time and value the learning involved in acquiring new knowledge and skills necessary in order to play a role. In Drama Therapy, as in Psychodrama, personal expansion and the experiencing of new thoughts and behaviours are highly valued within the context of expanding role effectiveness and role repertoire. Self image can be expanded through improvisational scenes which offer a huge range of roles and there is the possibility, depending on the situation, of playing roles other than oneself.

Another outcome valued by actors is that of expression. Through roles they have discovered that they could get in touch with and release emotions for themselves. In Drama Therapy, the ability to express oneself and impasses in this area emerge through improvisational exercises and become the focus of exploration. The therapist assists a client in reaching aesthetic distance which involves the ability to
relive emotions without being overwhelmed by them. When this psychic balance occurs catharsis is possible which, in turn, leads to moments of recognition and insight. This catharsis, then, involves an expressiveness where one is both spontaneously experiencing and freely expressing while still remaining aware and conscious of what is happening. In using dramatic principles and techniques, as with Psychodrama, Drama Therapy is fundamentally and inherently an expressive therapy. In this case drama is being used to enable individuals to express themselves via symbolic and creative mediums.

While actors experience as sense of safety in playing a role other than themselves which then frees them up to explore and experiment with new possibilities, ideas, feelings, and experiences, Drama Therapy also involves an essential element of safety through offering a forum separate from everyday reality that permits experimentation and being different without real life consequences. In creating a more symbolic, representational world it is possible for an individual to enact scenes and roles in order to understand oneself and explore areas of difficulty. The greater understanding and learning that emerges can then be reintegrated into real life. This point leads directly into another factor identified by actors, that of the transfer of dramatic experience to real life.

While actors find that some characters permeate their lives and impact them far beyond the performance period, in Drama Therapy the hope is that individuals will take insights and experiences of role expansion from one kind of reality into another. It is believed that change is possible within a combination of real and imagined realities and that that which is experienced within Drama Therapy can be transferred to daily life. If a behaviour, emotion, or role can be achieved in Drama Therapy then this suggests the capacity exists to carry these abilities into the outside world.

A final outcome described by actors is that of peak experiences. For actors this involves being lifted into a higher level of awareness, achieving a kind of childlike openness which is conducive to growth and learning, and experiencing a lessening of the need to control or cling to protective defenses; the result is the discovery of feelings, sensations, and new realms one did not know existed. Peak experiences seem possible in Drama Therapy, given it's emphasis on spontaneity and the reduction of defenses which is designed to foster an openness toward new experiences, behaviours, and roles. Achieving aesthetic distance which facilitates catharsis ideally leads to moments of recognition and insight which could conceivably be quite powerful for the individual if achieved. The childlike openness and freedom some
actors describe is similar to Drama Therapy's emphasis on spontaneity, creative expression, and an innate capacity for play. In Drama Therapy, and sometimes in acting, creative enactment alone carries "...the seeds of a therapeutic act" (Pendzik, 1988, p. 83).

**Fixed-Role Therapy**

Out of the three therapies reviewed, the outcomes of actors' experience most closely relate to Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) due to the common element of role-taking. Actors speak of psychological investigation as being a reward of taking on new characters, in which they gain insights into the diversity of human nature, thought, and experience. This can, for some, expand their ability to empathize, remain open minded and accept the differences of others. While the stated intent of FRT is not to offer an education in the area of psychology or an indepth study of human nature, such learning may be possible, especially due to the reality that FRT involves the creation of a new role which differs from a client's initial self characterization. In selecting the new qualities to "try on", it might be necessary to research the thoughts, behaviours, and experiences of others in order to create a role that is different from the client. As well, once a role has been written it may be necessary for the client to acquire additional understanding of this new character in order to play it effectively.

Actors describe inner discovery as being another beneficial outcome of the acting experience. Previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of themselves emerge through roles and, in some cases, they come to examine issues from their own lives which have been triggered by characters being played. They also find themselves using roles as objects of comparison which provide further clarification and definition of their own sense of self and identity. In FRT self discovery seems possible but is not as heavily emphasized as the introduction of and experimentation with new and different ways of being. However, as the final goal in FRT is for clients to assess the experience for themselves and to integrate whatever has been gained into their own lives, self awareness may be an important principle to incorporate more fully into this therapy. Early on in the therapy process the therapist and client explore the nature of the client's core constructs prior to creating the role sketch. Presumably during this preliminary period exploration takes place and the client develops some level of awareness as to the nature of his or her difficulties. However, as the intent of FRT is to encourage individuals to consider and experiment with new perspectives and not to give up their own in the process, it may be important to
foster and promote a greater understanding of a client's own perspectives to begin with so that, for the
individual, there is an awareness of what is valued, what is to be preserved, what is problematic, what can
comfortably be experimented with, and how the FRT experience can be integrated into the client's own
construct system. As FRT is to be a "creative" rather than a "repair" process and as it is the client who
writes the initial self characterization, the client needs a baseline of understanding from which to start and
from which to assess his or her FRT experience. The FRT process involves the client and therapist
rehearsing interpersonal situations, the client engaging in real life encounters as the character, and the
client and therapist reviewing each interpersonal experience; throughout this process the potential exists
for clients to gain new insights into their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Given that professional
actors emphasize the possibilities and benefits of self discovery through role taking, it may be important
to further emphasize this element in FRT and valuable for therapists to facilitate self understanding and
awareness throughout the FRT process, especially if the intent of FRT is not for the client to adopt the
role but to integrate the experiment back into his or her own self understanding. As sketches are enacted
individuals may, in fact, discover aspects of themselves they never new existed, aspects which they can
attribute more to themselves rather than to the character they are temporarily enacting.

In reviewing beneficial outcomes of acting experiences, the outcome of personal expansion probably
relates most strongly to FRT. Actors describe their lives as being enriched by characters that have caused
them to move outside known and comfortable boundaries and that have introduced them to new elements
of life previously unknown or unexplored. FRT is designed to, ideally, offer just such experiences. The
entire premise for this therapy is that an individual can benefit from undertaking a comprehensive change
for a brief period of time. The client is invited to explore alternative approaches and behaviours, to view
the world from the perspective of a different person, and to see what that perspective has to offer. It is
hypothesized that change and growth can occur through trying on a character different from oneself and
being exposed to alternate ways of constructing experience. Clients encounter the possibility of being
different and hopefully discover that if they can act in a different way they can, in fact, be different.
Actors affirm the possibility of taking on characters for brief periods of time and confirm that personally
expansive and enriching experiences can result. They identify increased understanding and learning
following from the playing of roles which involve new territory and push actors beyond familiar confines.
In addition, they describe benefitting over time from the range, variety, and accumulation of different roles they have played. The value of these ongoing experiences suggest the possible benefit of multiples experiences with a number of roles rather than a single experiment. As well, actors identify additional learning as emerging from the gathering of new information and skills necessary in order to effectively portray a character. Observation, research, and the acquisition of specific skills sensitize individuals to aspects of life they have hitherto been unaware, provide insights into the nature of others, and further abilities in new areas. While gathering information takes place in order to play a character, actors identify personal "spin offs" and personal benefits; it may be valuable, therefore, to consider how research, observation, and the acquisition of skills might be added to the process of creating as well as carrying out a new role characterization by a client. Actors also describe the enjoyment found in playing roles which possess challenging and attractive qualities. These characters add to and enrich the lives of actors and bring them in contact with personal characteristics they, in some cases, aspire towards and give them a sense of having experienced spirits or figures of "greatness". This affirms the importance of a FRT role sketch possessing qualities which a client finds positive and attractive and suggests the possible benefits of endowing the role with a depth and richness that challenges and inspires a client's imagination. Creating a role which seems reasonably attainable as well as one which contains inspiring and even "great" qualities might be a challenging and beneficial balance to seek in creating fixed-role sketches. As FRT suggests and actors affirm, the taking on of a role can and should be an enriching experience that adds rather than detracts from the individual.

Actors appreciate the opportunity for personal expression through role taking. In playing characters, actors are able to get in touch with as well as express thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. In specific instances, actors describe acting experiences in which characters paralleled aspects of their own lives and therefore offered the opportunity for the venting and even purging of difficult and intense emotions. FRT is not directly intended to offer a form of expression for clients but possibilities exist for them to get in touch with and express emotions through client/therapist preparatory role plays and, in playing a character different from themselves, perhaps clients are able to express themselves in new and different ways within real life relationships. It is interesting to note that George Kelly observed that individuals
demonstrate a heightened ability to express themselves within a role, one of several observations which led him to create FRT.

Actors experience a sense of safety in playing someone other than themselves. They can entertain and experiment with new possibilities through the personality of a character and they can experience the lives of many different people with the luxury of leaving them behind. Some feel less vulnerable or exposed playing characters in front of large groups of people than if they are being themselves and for others, feeling free to experience other characters facilitates personal discovery. FRT contains important elements of safety as well. The FRT sketch is one the client is not expected to adopt and within the context of experimentation the client is offered an element of protection. In fact, Kelly directs that the client is to be given the full protection of make believe and is to be encouraged to explore a new world without committing to it. At the end of the enactment period the client is urged to drop the character and assess the nature of the experience. Clients are able to adopt an "as if" approach in which they can attempt new alternatives. The sessions between client and therapist in which rehearsal, role playing, and review take place contain elements of safety and help prepare clients for real life encounters. However, actors have the benefit of their professional role whereas clients do not; it is acceptable and expected for actors to portray individuals other than themselves and perform them for others. For clients in FRT, however, who have donned new roles, albeit for a brief period time, they do not have the protection of the acting profession and it therefore may be a vulnerable and tenuous experience for the client and a confusing experience one for those with whom the client interacts. Such personal and emotional safety concerns need to be considered and incorporated so the client does not prematurely abandon the experiment because it is simply too vulnerable and uncomfortable an experience. If, in the end, the FRT process has been sustained and important issues have been addressed within a sufficiently safe environment, it is then necessary to attend to the transition from leaving the role to being "oneself" again and integrating what has been learned as the protective elements of role taking and experimentation are no longer present.

Actors describe the different ways in which acting experiences permeate their own personal lives even after the performance period is over. Some carry the character continuously with them during the weeks of rehearsal and performance, others remember adopting or discarding different qualities and
personalities which various characters possess, characters are sometimes stored in the form of ideas, images, and words which can be brought forth for future characters, or to assist the actor in a personal situation, and finally, some actors find that some characters inadvertently prepare them for real life events. All of these experiences suggest ways in which clients might be affected by taking on new roles. Certainly there is a strong emphasis on taking the FRT experience into real life for it to be considered a success. It is necessary for clients to play the role in real life and to experiment with real and existing interpersonal situations. For FRT, the transfer of the role taking experience to real life is essential; the actors' experiences indicate that positive effects of role taking on one's personal life are possible.

Actors relate peak or transcendent experiences as outcomes of role taking in which they are lifted to a higher level of awareness, experience feelings of joy and childlike openness which promote learning and growth, encounter a lessening of the need to control which enables them to be transported to new realms, and come in contact with characters of great spirit and courage which offer experiences of deep meaning, integrity, and spiritual release. It is hard to project whether FRT as it exists would lead to such transcendent experiences but since actors identify the potential opportunity for such elements to exist it might be beneficial to consider their possible place in FRT. Certainly gaining new heights of awareness should be attainable and it may be advantageous to encourage a sense of enjoyment, openness, and even playfulness along with the emphasis on experimentation in FRT to foster a greater receptivity to learning and growth. The area of meaning and depth may need addressing in FRT. While actors have the benefit of a beautifully crafted script which may offer ideas, qualities, feelings, thoughts, and a rich tapestry of meaning, the client has a fixed role sketch which, though personalized, has been created by the therapist and client. Endowing the sketch with depth and meaning which speaks to the client may be an important and essential challenge.
Experiences of Life Drama

In reviewing instances in which actors have been affected by their acting experiences, it is difficult to separate the event from the individual life of the actor. The ways in which actors are impacted greatly depend on the actors themselves and what they bring to the experience in terms of their own life history. The same character can affect two actors very differently as that character triggers or touches personal elements within two different people. In reviewing actors' testimonies it is impossible to truly convey the depth and extent to which actors have been affected by characters they have played without placing those experiences within the life contexts of the actors. In that way the acting experiences become continuations of themes, issues, and patterns which exist in the actors' lives. In approaching the review of acting experiences in this manner, it is possible to get to the true ways in which actors have been impacted and why the experience holds meaning for them. Of the actors interviewed, four actors, in particular, relate personally powerful acting experiences to their own life historical contexts.

Sam

Sam reveals how early life experiences, though seemingly insignificant at the time, influenced later experiences and, in addition, the sense of meaning and purpose he finds in performing characters.

As a child Sam recalls: "In my first Christmas concert in Sunday school, before doing it my mother kept telling me that I had to be heard, this was extremely important, and so when I did my little bit, at the end of it I shouted out, 'Could you hear me Mom?'; and the whole audience broke up and I thought this is neat, people laughed". The importance of "being heard" and the enjoyment found in entertaining others clearly made a deep impression on Sam, which is evident when he talks of what has been central to his life: "...my whole life has been centered around communication, how to get a point across - my degree in languages, in french, my education, acting, directing, hosting a radio show, all these things involved communication. What acting does is focus everything that you're doing on the art of communication at all its levels...". To Sam, learning becomes a rewarding by-product of having to understand the character and play in order to communicate their meaning and contents to others: "Everything is focused on getting the point across, to the other character and to the audience and if you're not doing that you've failed somehow...So everything allows you to learn in that context, the play itself, who wrote it, where they wrote it, when they wrote it, and the references within the play...". Thus the early lesson of having to get
his message across has translated into a central life philosophy which Sam is able to live out through communicating ideas on stage: "...you could pick any play you want and it's about communication...to me there's no other question".

Sam also recalls the pleasure he experienced in performing characters as a child and the rewards he received from playing people other than himself: "I learned at an early age that it was not fearsome to play somebody else, in fact I was praised for it. I enjoyed being praised". It is interesting, once again, to note Sam's thoughts regarding acting as an adult and how they relate to his early recollections. In particular, it revealing that Sam takes on various characters with comfort and ease, and enjoys the prospect of playing roles significantly different in nature from himself: "I've gotten myself into situations that are just a little bit strange so that I can learn a little bit more, so I enjoy doing characters that are unfamiliar to me a bit. There's a play I did where each actor played nine characters...in one play you had to do so many different things from a whining child to a wise old man and so that's expansive". Far from being threatened by a play of this nature with such far-reaching demands, Sam relishes the variety of experience and approaches it with an ease that comes from early life experiences. He recognizes that not everyone is comfortable with this ability to change personas: "A lot of people do feel threatened by people acquiring roles that are not apparently theirs...". However, to Sam, it is a natural, easy, and non-threatening process from which he learns and grows: "I've enjoyed a lot of things that are within my personality range but I certainly don't mind going outside, that characteristic is part of my personality - always looking out for learning...".

Thus, from early experiences which taught Sam the importance of "being heard" and the rewards involved in playing people other than himself, he developed two important premises on which to build his later philosophies and approaches to acting and life itself. For Sam, communication is everything and the portraying of characters a familiar and pleasurable opportunity for continual learning.

Natalie

As an actress, Natalie describes looking for the vulnerability of a character, the "pink spot" or the thing the character is "most frightened of" or "fearful of exposing". As soon as she finds that link with the character then she has "the whole structure of the character". Natalie also identifies pain as her way of discovering the inner workings of a character: "the connection for me is pain". Natalie, herself,
speculates on why it is that she connects so deeply with the pain of her characters and relates this to memories from her childhood: "...it may have come from, partly unconsciously, my mother's work with children all her life, many's a time as a young girl I would hear Mummy share incidents of discovering that children had been hurt by families or children not being cared for...and it always went deep within me cause I know I am the kind of person who sucks up the pain of the world". Natalie then adds: "...I have this ability and this sensibility of being able to see other people's pain and...for some reason, want to alleviate it, try to temper it a bit. I don't know why, I'll never know that...". In discussing some memorable characters with whom Natalie feels a special connection, it is interesting to note the way in which Natalie consistently identifies the elements of pain within the characters. In the case of one character, who struggles within a loveless marriage to regain a sense of her own identity, Natalie has little difficulty in finding the "pink spot" of this woman: "I think everybody knows, I do for sure, know what it feels like inside my heart, inside my guts, and inside my head to be sad and to be hurt in a way that you almost can't articulate...". In portraying this character, and in experiencing and expressing this person's pain for others, Natalie, in a sense, connects with the universal pain of her audiences who can relate to this character as well. In offering such an accessible character with whom audiences can identify Natalie is perhaps trying to alleviate the pain and suffering of her audience members: "...from the point of view of me playing a character like that that expresses, finally, shame at what she has not done with her life, I mean that's obviously an incredible character to play, every day, in all these different cities, with audiences that re-affirm that fact, of acknowledgement of a life like that". For Natalie, who saw the sadness of others as a child, human suffering in various forms is experienced by everyone: "...most of us are sad, for reasons we don't even know...". Natalie also speaks of watching her mother work to ease the difficulties of others and of her own desire to alleviate the pain she sees in those around her. In truthfully bringing forth the emotional realities of her characters for audiences to see, identify with, and even learn from, it is possible that she is answering her own need to help others in some way. In another example, Natalie recalls playing the role of a deeply disturbed child, the toughest role she has ever played. While this character gave her insights into the nature of a disturbed mind and was a role she felt the public needed to see, her sensitivity to the suffering of others and ability to "suck up the pain of the world", in this case, led her to experience the true horror of this tragic child's life: "...it was like playing in the mouth
of hell every night, it hurt deeply, it physically hurt me to play that role...". Ultimately Natalie was unable to find fulfillment in the experience of playing this sad individual, as it was impossible for her to provide hope and courage to her audiences in addition to the acknowledgment of pain and suffering. In this instance, for the message of this character to come across, pain could be alleviated neither for the character, Natalie, nor the audience. In asking Natalie what she was left with once she had finished playing this character she responded with: "Nothing, absolutely nothing...there was no reward for me. I played a very sad and tragic lost individual, there was no hope in that little girl's life". It becomes clear, then, that Natalie's life long ability to feel the pain of others opens the door to her understanding her characters. The meaning she finds in performing characters can be found, in part, in her desire to truthfully portray the emotional life of her characters. In doing this she possibly aids in alleviating the pain of others through offering characters of both touching sadness and of courage and hope with whom audiences can relate and find inspiration.

Another significant life event in Natalie's personal history significantly affected the way in which she experienced a specific character and probably the way in which she approaches many other aspects of her life. Natalie recalls one moment in a particular play as having deep and personal meaning for her, one in which she stands at the edge of the ocean: "...about to jump into water that's as deep as forever". She then goes on to explain the significance of this single line: "That's the most moving line in the play to me, because for me...that's what life's about, and that's what my job's about, being able to jump into water that's as deep as forever...unless you're willing to jump into water, you don't know what's at the bottom, you know, and I love that concept, I really love that concept". The true power of this water image lies in it's connection to a real life event in which Natalie came very near to death: "...I had an experience when I was sixteen years old in which I, thankfully, came back basically from the dead. It was to the suprise of the surgeons working around me; they had alerted my parents that I was supposed to - not be here. Anyway, I came back and I think that everytime I get to that line, cause it's a very mystical and spiritual line, I think that what happens is that I am taken to that point where I was on the brink of the next voyage in terms of death". Far from being a frightening memory, Natalie feels she is reminded of something truly remarkable: "...getting to that line every night...is a holy experience because it's reminiscent of something that is not frightening, that was absolutely extraordinary...I remember being on the brink of that
possibility and that was a very favourable memory". Natalie's near death experience illuminates, not only the meaning the one line holds for her, but the way in which she approaches her profession. As she herself states, her life and work are about being willing to "jump into water" without knowing what will be found at the bottom. Natalie appears to take great pleasure in encountering the "unknown" in her work. As she explains, the most truthful portrayal of a character requires a willingness to risk and to accept that "there are never any definite answers". These elements, which might make some people uncomfortable, are appealing and attractive to Natalie who already knows that extraordinary and remarkable possibilities lie beyond the known and familiar confines of human experience.

For Natalie, then, her own life history has truly affected the way in which she experiences characters and the way in which she approaches her life's work.

Deborah

Deborah experienced a powerful situation in which the life of a character paralleled aspects of her own life history. As a result, strong emotions and issues from Deborah's own past emerged through the character, which she then had to further resolve for herself. In playing an innocent and naive character deeply invested in a marriage in which her husband was being unfaithful, Deborah found herself re-experiencing her own first marriage in which she, too, was innocent to her husband's infidelity: "...she's so invested in the completeness of their life that she just can't see anything else. Well of course what that was, was the person that I was in my first marriage". Because the director wanted Deborah to truly portray the vulnerability and naivete of the character, Deborah found herself truly paralleling her own experience and felt emotionally defenseless in rehearsals. As a result she actually experienced physical symptoms stemming from deep feelings of fear and anxiety: "...I would recognize that I wasn't breathing. Also my right ear drum was fibrillating...the fibrillation in my ear was not because I was worried about remembering what came next, but because I was being yelled at by someone who was cruelly betraying me (in the play) and I was panic stricken...I felt thrown back and incredibly vulnerable, I felt physically frail..".

The play brought up a number of personal issues for Deborah which related to her own past experience. The simple fact that the character of the husband is involved with a much younger woman triggered an issue for Deborah around older men marrying much younger women and fathering children:
"...men don't live long enough to raise these babies so I don't think that's nice for the babies; but there's another part of it for me, it's an emotional trigger, which is that my own father didn't live long enough and wasn't well enough to raise me which I'm deeply sad about". However, the portrayal of the marriage in the play sparked very sensitive issues concerning Deborah's own marriage as well: "...as a woman I was set aside in terms of my own sexuality and my own beauty and my own lustiness and my own persona and my own fullness as a person because I was the wife and mother, just as in this play, and then somebody else, this single woman is attributed those qualities. In the letters from that single woman, in my own life, I was always spoken of as the wife, I didn't even have a name and that just enraged me. All of the rage of those seventeen years of neglect and abuse and unbelievable manipulation are very close to the surface, so when this character (the husband) was doing the same thing to me and I had to be absolutely innocent like I didn't know what was going on, it was very hard". During moments of the play Deborah would find herself transported back to identical moments in her own past: "...when I move towards her (the 'other woman') and I see her tense with fear, that's the part at which I would start to check out. I have actually had experiences like that...". For Deborah, having to relive the pain of her former marriage became an enormous personal challenge as she had to return to a situation in which she felt emotionally unsafe: "For me to get to a point where I could lie to myself again, when I could return to the old neurosis and lie to myself, that was the hardest thing I have ever done. It was the exact situation I was in in that marriage. For me to go back into that place of danger was unbelievably difficult". This play, then, brought Deborah face to face with still potent emotions and issues from her past. During rehearsal, especially, she played out the innocence and vulnerability of her character and relived the shattering discovery of a husband's deception and duplicity. It was not until performance itself that Deborah began to experience some relief and even rewards from playing this difficult character.

With the addition of the audience during performance, Deborah discovered support where previously she had felt isolation: "Once the audience was in, suddenly my character had four hundred people on my side...As the play resolves, when my character finally does figure out what's going on... she just goes cold and the audience goes absolutely silent... they always cared about what I would feel but the discovery's very painful. When the scene continued I struggled with the tears and that was very real every single night". With each performance Deborah relived the terrible moment of "discovery". However, with the
audience present and caring about the feelings of the character, she did not feel so alone. To Deborah, the help she received from a "family of friends, a good therapist, and lots of talking" in her own life were similar to the audience "breathing in and out, loving the moments of triumph" and being "engaged on (her) side". Another element in the play which assisted Deborah in overcoming difficulties was the opportunity to play out the scene in which her character triumphs, a scene Deborah lacked in her own situation: "It was so satisfying this scene...it was the triumphal scene which I never had in my real life, I certainly would have imagined it but never had it". The feelings of hurt and anger which had never been redressed in Deborah's own life were suddenly given centre stage attention and were both acknowledged and vindicated: "...it had to do with me winning, me triumphing, me right, and fair play, goodness, it had to do with poetic justice". A major factor in this "triumphing", again, was the presence of audience members who served as witnesses to both the character's and Deborah's suffering and victory: "...with the audience there on my side the energy shifted; it was like in the real situation in my life, once other people knew what had been going on I grew stronger". In her own marriage Deborah clearly wished for an acknowledgment of the deception which had taken place and for some form of resolution: "I wanted everybody to see the truth, I wanted the lying and the manipulating to stop, I wanted it to be all on the table". As Deborah sadly acknowledges, life often does not work out that way: "The way that marriage ended was very much like life is...there never was a proper dismantling which to this day makes me angry and sad". Deborah's experience within the play, however, was markedly different: "...whereas a play of course is going to resolve things, life sort of tends to peter out...in a play there's a wonderful resolution, completeness, and completion". Through the play Deborah relived emotions from her own life, experienced the vindication and resolution she had never received, and enjoyed the support and acknowledgement of hundreds of people who came to care deeply for the welfare of this character so similar to Deborah herself. With the passage of time Deborah later reflects: "...it was a risky, risky thing but I felt a lot of satisfaction...some of my understanding that has emerged is about the whole business of practicing, playing out critical elements of one's personality". As a final outcome of the whole experience Deborah concludes that she herself has come to a deeper sense of peace and resolution regarding her own pain: "I have a more compassionate view of (my husband), a new step of forgiveness has occurred
because I had the chance to have some completion... for some of the past anyway, I was able to let some things go and feel quite grateful for my life as I understand it".

In examining yet another character Deborah also finds links to her own life. In this instance she discovered that the lead up to doing the play resembled elements of the play itself: "My character is a woman where the family focus is always on everybody else and she never has a place in the sun... Well that's precisely what happened around this play...". In receiving little support in doing the play from her own family Deborah began to see similarities between herself and the character. In feeling that she was always the one putting the welfare of others before her own, and in receiving support from a close friend who urged her to "fight for (herself) like that character's fighting for herself", Deborah decided it was important for her to go away to do the role despite family disapproval. Her decision, she realized, was not without potential consequences: "The first time I went away was ten years ago for two months and when I came back my (first) marriage was over. So the stakes in going away are very high for me...". However, doing this particular role began to take on particular meaning as Deborah realized it symbolized breaking from unhealthy patterns she had engaged in all her life: "I was absolutely riddled with anxiety as a child about my family and how they would manage. The message I got was that they were incompetent and therefore I needed to be there... if you are revered and appreciated for your good works then being a caregiver is a good job, but without that safety and recognition it becomes necessary to find that little place in yourself that is not involved in looking after other people. In going away I'm letting all that go...". It is somehow fitting that the character Deborah was going away to play was also someone fighting for "her own place in the sun".

At the heart of Deborah's anxiety as a child was an element of secrecy within her family which compelled her to take on feelings of responsibility: "...if those other people wouldn't say the truth then I was responsible for looking after them... I only remember secrets early in my life. There is a sense that the implications for me speaking up as a child were particularly confusing and dangerous". When this early secrecy and fear are considered, in addition to the secrecy, deception, and dishonesty present in her first marriage, it is not surprising to discover that Deborah's central purpose in acting is to express open and honest emotions and to bare the truth publicly for audiences to see. When asked why she performs, Deborah simply responds: "... because I want to say the true things in public places. I hate lying and I
mean that in the broadest sense...I feel physically ill when I see people doing things that I know to be wrong and hurtful..."

In playing a woman facing dishonesty within her marriage and another woman who is standing up for her own needs and desires, Deborah experienced the rewards of playing characters with histories and feelings not unlike her own and, in playing these characters truthfully for all the world to see, she broke the silence and deception which haunted her own past.

**Kathy**

For Kathy, the world of the theatre was important to her at a very early age and has played a significant role during her entire life; changes to her approach to acting have reflected fundamental changes within herself.

Kathy sees very close connections between her difficult childhood and her early attraction to theatre: "...I was a shy child and a rather psychologically abused child, I realize now...and so my way was to go somewhere else". That "somewhere else" became the magical, separate world of the theatre which Kathy could use as an escape from her own life: "...my way into theatre had to do with going somewhere, and creating this wonderful world and being somewhere so that I didn't have to be in the world...". She similarly adds: "...I didn't even think life was very important because if bad things happened I had this, as long as I had it". Kathy makes a clear link between early life events and her use of theatre as a means of coping: "...some people react differently to situations they come out of, mine was to go within myself and into my imagination". Theatre also held a sense of safety in which none of the negative consequences or realities from daily life existed in this imaginary world: "...they (characters) won't get into trouble, I mean they may get into trouble in the play maybe, but I won't, and in a way it's a very safe place to go too, even if it's bad you can take off your makeup and go home".

As well, Kathy found that she was able to express aspects of herself within the theatre context, in contrast to her own childhood in which her own expressive nature was squelched: "I think I thought in terms of release and letting go and that was a place where I could do all those things because I couldn't do that anywhere else. I certainly have come to realize that a lot of things that have been done to me as a child and in my family were counter-productive to my being an actress. I wasn't to express myself - don't laugh too loud, you voice carries too far etc. etc.". Kathy identified at a young age that theatre held the
opportunity for the expression she could not find elsewhere and she recalls the frustration she felt at not being able to join the actors she saw on stage: "I know that when I was twelve I went to see a play and I was very upset afterwards because these people could go back the next day and do it some more and I had to go home...it seemed to set up something in me and it's something to do with a creative nature that I have and it wasn't getting expressed or dealt with...". While she lacked the opportunity and ability to express her feelings in real life, Kathy discovered that the characters could provide all this for her: "...acting is probably more to express because you've got somebody else's stuff and (that's) what I liked; because I didn't feel I had the means of expression myself and felt I was inarticulate and it was difficult to talk about things that I felt, then I had somebody else's words and they could say it and I could say it too". As a result, it is not surprising to find that Kathy was especially drawn to intense and emotional characters who could provide her with the outlet she needed for her own deeply expressive nature: "...there's something in those characters, I don't know what there is that's consistent - women of strong emotions I think". Kathy identifies this opportunity for personal expression as probably the most important function acting provided: "I didn't have the words and the character did. And actually that's probably the most truthful, that's probably the clearest I can get about this whole thing. In a lot of those parts I connected with them because I would read them and say, oh good...I need to say that".

While her early life probably provided Kathy with the greatest motivation to choose acting as a profession, it also formed Kathy's particular approach to character development. Because she experienced her individuality and emotions as being disregarded by those around her, she did not develop an awareness of her inner feelings or a sense of personal identity: "...when as a child you feel your parents have the important, big feelings and as a child you have less important feelings which then never get played out...how can you act?...if you shut down certain aspects of yourself and then you need them, you can't call on them". It was therefore with great consternation that Kathy found herself asked, during her theatre training, to bring aspects of her inner self to the character; this was difficult as she was unaware as to what she had within herself to call upon: "...I remember acting teachers who told me to start out being myself...I thought, I don't know who that is...that wasn't what it was all about for me, I didn't want to be me, I wanted to be somebody else". Thus acting for Kathy meant entering into the world of the character and leaving herself behind. Through the character she could express emotions and live within
the safe imaginary world with no consequences and little awareness of her own identity separate from the stage: "I'd do a rehearsal I wouldn't remember and it was as though whoever this person or character was stepped in and there is something about that, about stepping aside and saying OK and giving yourself over to it...when it was scary was the night it eluded me and there I was left with me and I didn't know what to do and I didn't do a very good performance and then it didn't come back". Over time, and due to experiences such as this one, Kathy began to realize something was missing from her characterizations - mainly Kathy herself. Without the anchoring of a character within her own inner life and experience, she was left with the risky though rewarding situation of creating a character totally based on the playwright's creativity and her own fantastical imagination. She then began the long process of creating a healthier balance: "...I did start looking at other things that had happened to me personally or making an imaginary situation out of something that's personal. I'd always worked in a slightly different way which was to create a circumstance out of the life of the character as I understood it from the play...". In one particular and memorable instance which served as a turning point, Kathy recalls with amazement how she found emotions within herself coming forth to create the emotional life of the character: "...I had that depth of anger and rage and grief, I had all those things...there's still some part of the imagination that is still very powerful for me and is very important, but I would say, yes, it's coming closer to whoever I am and drawing on me, and not something that I create in my imagination and not something that specifically happened to me - but simply that I am in grief or in rage". She then adds further: "...I couldn't believe the anger that came out of me, I knew it was there, I'd read it in the script, but it burst out in a way that I'd never experienced before, and I thought, where did that come from? Well of course it came from me and then it was always there". In retrospect, Kathy realizes that this seeking, and at times even reaching, a balance between imagination and reality, character and actor, has been part of a slowly evolving personal process, as Kathy states: "...a long journey for a long time". In playing characters in which she could draw both on her own inner material as well as that of the character, Kathy discovered she was able to reach a level of trust and security she had not known before: "...it does have to do with trusting...and trusting that what I do is OK and that's been a long time in coming". In trusting more, Kathy also had to face the reality of what she had been doing for many years: "...I seem to have relied on my imagination more than my actual being, more than other actors; if you don't know what you're going to do, if the
circumstances are beyond you obviously that’s what you do...I think that what’s switching now is that I’m starting to work more out of what’s actually happening to me”. Later Kathy adds: "...it's coming more out of that place of truth that only I know never mind the part that everybody accepts...".

The crucial ways in which Kathy’s approach to acting have changed and the different ways in which she has experienced the characters she has played, signify a deeply personal life journey. In overcoming a childhood of damage and silence in which she turned to theatre for expression and escape, she gradually faced the buried aspects of herself in order to more truthfully and successfully perform characters and to benefit from the experiences. Rather than wanting to "be" other people or characters, the ultimate reward is that Kathy emerged wanting to be her own person: "...there was a kind of freedom, especially when I started, that I could do some of those things on stage at least that I couldn't do somewhere else...there was a strong desire to 'go there'... an imaginary life was much more interesting. It's taken me until now to say my life is more interesting than going to do that". In many ways Kathy moved from having the character do the speaking for her, to speaking more for herself. As a result of these personal and professional changes, Kathy found that, while characters were in many ways more meaningful to her, they were easier to leave behind once she was finished with them. As they provided a less crucial function in her life and she was able to consistently return to a more solid sense of self, she could more easily let them go: "More personal and less personal at the same time, because as it becomes more personal it's coming out of me, it's who I am, but then that's much easier to do and perhaps easier to walk away from". This idea is vividly conveyed by an image Kathy uses, in which she describes the presence of past characters she has played as resembling everpresent ghosts: "...for years they were just there in the corner, the ghosts of the people I played that kind of hung around and that were always there...I'm not sure that they're hanging around so much anymore, maybe one or two...perhaps when they come more out of you they don't have to hang around, you finish and say goodbye and that's that...and I suppose before I didn't know where I continued, so they had to hang around, to help me continue".

In many ways it is fortunate that Kathy discovered theatre early in her life, for it provided an important function in giving her a safe and positive world in which she could experience life and express emotions through characters. The changes in her life have been facilitated and marked by different ways in which she has experienced her characters. While characters still provide a means of expression and an
opportunity for her to use her creative imagination, Kathy has received new found satisfaction in bringing her inner self to the characters she plays and in striking a more effective and rewarding balance between her two worlds.

Relevance of Experiences of Life Drama to Drama Based Therapies

In looking at those actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played it is impossible to separate the experience from the life context of the actor. When the experience is viewed within such a context it becomes apparent that playing a certain character has acted as a catalyst for and a continuation of themes, issues, and patterns in actors' lives. The same role affects various actors differently depending on that which is triggered and brought forth from within the actor.

Psychodrama

In relating the experiences of the four actors reviewed to Psychodrama, some connections can be made between these two very different realms. Psychodrama involves the recreation of scenarios very close to those experienced by people in real life with the expectation that, by re-experiencing and confronting critical events and important relationships within a safe environment, that new responses and understanding, resolution, and learning can take place. Therapy, then, involves the simulation of internal and external realities, that is, both approximated real life situations and externalizations of mental processes. Deborah's acting experiences, out of all the actors' testimonies, have the most to offer to Psychodrama's particular approach as she, in fact, re-experienced earlier personal life experiences within the confines of playing a character. While this differs from Psychodrama's emphasis on clients playing themselves rather than the characters of others, Deborah's experiences attest to the potential power of reliving important life experiences through dramatic means. Deborah encountered an uncanny and direct parallel between the life of a character and events in her own past, in particular she found herself reliving the painful ending of her first marriage in which she had had to recognize her husband's long term infidelity. In playing a character which caused a re-experiencing of the past, Deborah not only struggled with painful and still powerful emotions but, through sustaining the experience, she emerged with a greater sense of resolution and completion. She relived the pain but gained the opportunity to have the moments of triumph, vindication, and justice she had never had, but had wanted in real life. She reached a new step of forgiveness towards the individual who had been the source of much grief and she felt able
to let go of some of the pain she had still carried from that earlier time. Just such an outcome of resolution is what Psychodrama aims to achieve. Psychodrama also sees the altering, improving, and expanding of roles as central to psychological health. This can involve the protagonist discovering roles he or she has long since lost or never developed. For Deborah, through playing a character she moved from being the long suffering, naive and victimized wife, to a woman in charge of her own life, openly acknowledging her feelings of hurt and anger for all to hear. Experiencing this role change as the character strengthened just such a shift within Deborah herself.

Another important element in Psychodrama is that of the group setting. The group is seen as possessing enormous power and value in facilitating individual change and much is possible when individuals feel supported and free to express themselves with the knowledge that others share in and bear witness to their pain and struggle for change. It is interesting to relate Deborah's experience of the audience to the importance of the group in Psychodrama. While in rehearsal Deborah had felt quite isolated and unsupported. However, once she began to perform the character in front of an audience her experience of isolation transformed to one of total support and validation. She felt she had hundreds of people suddenly on her side and while the reliving of painful emotions night after night was difficult, she was strengthened by the knowledge that she was not alone. The audiences served as witnesses who acknowledged and shared in her pain and Deborah herself compared the audiences to the role played by friends and therapists in her own life in the past.

Another important element in Psychodrama, also present in Deborah's acting experiences, is that of catharsis. Through "here and now" experiencing individuals release and express powerful emotions, and a heightened realism and immediacy is present in the "acting out" rather than the "talking about" personal experiences and difficulties. Although staged, the interactions and emotions which emerge are very real. Deborah's experience attests to the enormous power of acting out, even unintentionally, painful scenarios and situations from one's past and, though she played a different character, her own emotions were intensely real.

Psychodrama not only involves resolution of the past but sometimes rehearsal or preparation for the future. It is interesting that another character Deborah encountered embodied elements that Deborah was anticipating within her own life. The character shifted from putting all others before herself to finally
creating her own "place in the sun", though she encountered resistance and disapproval from others. Deborah ironically found that, in going away to do this play, her life was paralleling that of the character she was to perform. She herself was receiving little support from others and yet saw herself fighting for herself the way the character was and anticipating that, in doing the character, she would be symbolically breaking from personally destructive patterns and finding her own "place in the sun". As Deborah's experience demonstrates, re-creation and resolution of past scenarios as well as rehearsal for new ones are possible through the use of dramatic enactment.

Drama Therapy

Rather than re-enacting real life scenarios, Drama Therapy relies on the use of loosely structured dramatic techniques and exercises through which aspects of the self emerge. Through improvisational structures an individual is forced to call upon inner ideas, memories, and images to use as material for the exercises and whatever is chosen has unique and important meaning for the person. Drama Therapy, then, strongly incorporates the life context of the individual and encourages feelings and experiences often far from immediate consciousness to emerge in symbolic form. Drama Therapy techniques, therefore, can be compared to projective techniques. While Deborah's experiences differed in that she was not given a loosely structured exercise but instead a complex and detailed character, the character did become, in a sense, a projective technique for Deborah in which aspects of the self emerged, were projected onto the character, and expressed in symbolic form. This perhaps indicates the value and potential of using role taking, whether through written characters or improvisations, for projective purposes. The key to a situation such as Deborah's, of course, is that the character paralleled her own life so closely. In Drama Therapy interventions focus on that which is interrupting spontaneous play as this reflects problems clients have in real life. It is interesting that Deborah experienced extensive struggles and difficulties in rehearsal as she encountered her own personal reactions. Certainly the interruptions in the acting process she was experiencing were indicating areas of personal distress which needed addressing.

In using unstructured exercises and encouraging inner aspects of the self to emerge the hope, in Drama Therapy, is that awareness, new understanding, and the development of more effective role relationships will follow. In the experiences of life drama described by actors, certainly new understanding and awarenesses have emerged through playing characters. Sam came to realize the
central theme of communication in his life through characters and Natalie became conscious of the impact of an earlier near death experience on her life through a character that caused her to re-experience that extraordinary mystical and spiritual encounter. Deborah, of course, became aware of still present and painful issues and feelings concerning a past relationship through a character which brought the past alive again. Another character also made Deborah aware of her patterns of emotional self neglect and reinforced the importance of her standing up for herself. Finally, Kathy, through acting, came to realize that, rather than playing characters to avoid reality, she could use her experiences to facilitate aspects of herself to emerge. She was amazed to discover, in fact, that she had the emotions and knowledge within herself that a character required. Characters, then, can offer opportunities for the emergence of aspects of the self and the kind of insight and understanding that are hoped for in approaches such as Drama Therapy.

Kathy's experiences carry interesting implications for Drama Therapy's concept of aesthetic distance. In Drama Therapy a balance distance between self and role indicates healthy functioning. It is in this midway between an overdistanced state of repression and an underdistanced state of emotional flooding that a person can both think and feel, both re-live and make sense of his or her difficulty. It is in this balance between participating and observing that catharsis, equilibrium, recognition, and insight can occur. Kathy's experiences relate somewhat to this theme of balance and distance. For a great deal of her life Kathy used theatre as a means of escape from reality and as a means of coping. Characters provided a vehicle for expression and, as she had not developed a strong sense of her own identity, she had felt more comfortable being many other people, entering the world of the character, and leaving herself behind. She had little or no distance between herself and her roles until she ran into difficulties and realized that she lacked a balance which could enhance her character portrayals as well her own sense of self. In seeking to anchor characters more firmly within a sense of her own identity she discovered new emotions, experiences, and dimensions she had not known existed within herself and she moved towards a balance between self and role, and between reality and imagination. Where previously she had given herself over to characters and found safety and protection in the theatre world, she experienced a greater sense of emotional healthy and strength in finding what could be called an aesthetic distance. Kathy's process highlights the various ways in which dramatic experience can be used. It can act as a fantasy
world which serves as an escape from reality or it can provide opportunities for experiencing and learning within a realm somewhat removed but not isolated from reality. In Drama Therapy individuals have the opportunity to re-create problem areas from real life within a removed environment where they can be safely explored and understood. In a representational environment reality and imagination can be combined together and, ideally, new awarenesses and learning are taken back into the everyday. For Kathy, certainly reaching a balance between self and role, and imagination and reality, through her character portrayals created personal growth and impacted her life beyond the stage.

**Fixed-Role Therapy**

Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) is based on George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory which postulates that people seek to understand, predict, and control events. This leads them to search for regularity, tendencies, and patterns which are formed into what Kelly calls personal constructs. Individuals encounter difficulties when they continue to use constructs despite repeated invalidation by events. In the face of invalidating information individuals will either expand the construct or constrict options or experiences to lessen the threat. In order to expand, alter, or create more effective constructs Kelly suggested that individuals could benefit from taking on a new role for a brief period of time. FRT seems to emphasize the introduction of new elements to challenge existing views more than a focus upon the emergence of inner aspects of the self or exploration of the nature of an individual's life context. However, the first step in FRT is the identification of an individual's core constructs and the areas of difficulty and this does involve the history and thematic elements of a client's life. In looking at the experiences of life drama of some actors and what insights they might have to offer FRT, it appears that some memorable characters affirmed and strengthened core constructs, that is, they validated core elements of meaning for the actors. For Sam, the themes of communication and needing to be heard were central early in his life and solidified by his acting experiences. For Natalie, the acting experience which recalled for her her earlier near death experience, deeply affirmed a central attitude toward life which moves her to embrace uncertainty and the unknown. Kathy is perhaps an example of someone who discovered that her previous way of construing the world was no longer working and her tendency to give herself over to her characters and embrace an imaginary world which protected her from reality was causing personal and professional problems. In expanding and altering her construct system she was able
to seek a better, more effective balance. In looking at what these acting experiences might offer to FRT, it is possibly important for FRT to emphasize the constructs one wishes to change as well as identify and affirm the ones that hold central value and meaning to the individual. In this way change is integrated into a strengthened sense of self. These dual elements can be addressed in the initial self sketch that clients write in which they describe themselves and in the following role sketch which contains both new qualities to experiment with as well as some qualities which the client already possesses and may even value. The new sketch must be one that appears tangible, possible and attractive to the client and one that speaks to the client's experience and sense of what is important. As Kelly emphasizes, the intent is not for the client to adopt the character but to simply explore new perspectives. The role sketch is enacted within the current life context of the client through interactions with significant others. At the end the role is abandoned and the experience is interpreted by the client in terms of his or her own construct system.

Whether an individual discovers aspects of themselves of which they were previously unaware, or are introduced to new ways of perceiving or interacting with the world, the actors' experiences of life drama affirm that that which is learned must somehow be incorporated into or conceptualized in terms of life themes, patterns, and personal history. While FRT offers interesting possibilities for new ways of approaching situations and relationships, as a therapy it might benefit from addressing how an individual is to incorporate these new experiences into existing constructs, and might be further enriched and deepened by considering how to include concepts such as life drama.
5. Culmination or Movement of the Whole

In returning to the concept of the dialectic, thus far the context of the dialectic, the actor and character as two dialectical poles, and the process of the dialectic itself have been described, supported by the actors' interviews. The outcome of the process was then explored in terms of how the actors have been personally impacted by the dialectical experience. While, in this previous section, the focus was on the outcomes as they relate to the actors' own lives, other statements made by the actors suggest that there are culminating experiences which involve a focus larger and more profound than simply the actors themselves. In discussing the sense of meaning and purpose in acting experiences, some actors seem to focus strongly on the relationship between the actor and the outer world, and the communication between performer and audience. As a final culmination of the dialectical experience, actors describe connections to principles and forces higher than themselves and see the purpose of their work as defined by an outward as well as inward meaning; that is, the impact they have on the larger world and the adherence to certain guiding principles create the final completion of meaning in the acting process.

Actor as Messenger

Actors often see their profession as more than a job. As actors, they are messengers and communicators of ideas and reflectors of human experience. Specifically, actors communicate the ideas of the playwright: "You really are that medium, that middle thing and the writer's words, the directions, pass through you and out to the audience" (John). Deborah states: "In this work I'm there to be the instrument of the playwright and to understand and sell his or her ideas in the most familiar manner...". She continues, adding that the job of the actor is the job "of the messenger, of the person who communicates the ideas, it's an important job...it's a social service". These statements suggest that actors feel that their roles involve giving themselves over to the important ideas which must be communicated, becoming instruments or vessels used as part of this communication process.

Actors also describe themselves as playing a part in the tradition and art of storytelling: "Actors are like storytellers, they keep the stories going, pass it on" (John). For Natalie, acting involves communicating the character's story, thereby connecting with the important stories in everyone: "...I have great respect and great regard and great empathy for all these people (characters) because they have a
story, everybody has a story, and everybody's story is as important or unimportant as the next person's...."

For Jean, the role of the actor is to act as a reflector or mirror of society as a whole. The extent to which the actor is heard or suppressed by society is a clear indication of that society's health and values: "...I take theatre very seriously indeed, I think it is the thermometer of the health of our society...our society has definitely tried to muffle the voice of the artist...". In a society such as Jean describes, to her it becomes even more crucial that the voice of the artist be heard.

For Victoria, the role of the actor is one she believes was bestowed upon her and she feels moved to carry out this particular "calling": "...I felt it was my duty to do it (acting) well because it was something that somehow came from above me; that I feel has really been a gift from divine providence or something". With this deep sense of purpose in being a designated communicator to the world, Victoria is motivated to reach as much of the world as possible: "...let's say I'm one of the many who've been chosen to tell a story, to do a job for this world. If I feel that is what my purpose is then I want to tell it to as many people as I can and that's the meaning...I'm like the vehicle and that way when I enter into a project I do it out of a sense of duty and a sense of love...when you do it for something other than yourself it seems easier".

Whether these actors see themselves as messengers, storytellers, communicators, mediums, instruments, thermometers of society, or reflectors of human experience, they all indicate a connection with deeper purposes and forces larger and greater than themselves, in which they carry out an age old role that fulfills a need in society and in people's lives.

**Actor as Agent**

In fulfilling the needs of society, some actors see themselves as performing a social function in which they educate their audiences as to the problems in society and, as well, challenge, reflect, and even assist in remedying the problems and difficulties which exist within the human experience itself.

For Natalie, the role of the actor is to challenge audience members to step outside the conventional and limited confines of acceptable behaviour and narrow-minded attitudes towards others: "...I give the world honesty and they respect it, and they want to see more of it because our world is taking us in a direction that is so terribly beige, and so terribly behaviour oriented, and when anything is eccentric or
different or handicapped, people don't know how to deal with it. So, the world is becoming safer and
more predictable and underneath that is this sort of need to encounter brash and spontaneous and
unfrightened stuff, and when it does appear it reminds everybody about that in them...". Through acting,
audience members are presented with elements of society that they normally choose to ignore; as well,
they may be exposed to aspects that still exist within themselves which have long been suppressed or
denied and, through theatre, are encouraged to loosen the boundaries and limitations which bind them.
For John, challenging audience members involves transporting them to new places and ideas, also
allowing for the importance of sheer enjoyment: "I'm really big on taking people different places, both
educational and entertaining". For Sam, challenging an audience fundamentally involves communication.
Only the effective communication of ideas will lead audiences to consider and reflect upon the ideas
presented: "Everything is focused on getting the point across, to the other characters and to the audience
and if you're not doing that you've failed somehow...You've trying to get them to be understanding and
empathetic, to go away and think about what was there of importance". In a specific example, Natalie
anticipates the playing of an upcoming character of power and wealth in which the challenge for her as an
actress will be to understand the character and discover the essential ideas and themes which need to be
transmitted to the audience: "It'll be interesting to see what kind of a lesson there is, and I in my
performance want to be able to show the success but at the same time at what cost, because everything
has a price". Simply understanding the character can be an interesting and self illuminating exercise.
However, as Natalie and other actors suggest, it is the effective communication of the character and the
important ideas inherent within the lives of the characters which must take place to challenge audiences
and cause them to ponder and reflect upon the performance long after it is over.

One way in which actors challenge audiences is to accurately reflect human experience to them. In
holding up a mirror, audiences are sometimes forced to see aspects of themselves or of society in general,
which reflect both troubling and uplifting elements of human nature. To Natalie, good actors have an
"ability to act on behalf of the world, they are a mirror...". In one experience Natalie recalls playing a
deeply disturbed character in which she herself found little reward. However, this was a beautifully
written and powerful character which needed to be communicated to audiences as it reflected such sad
and tragic human realities: "...hers was a voice that needed to be heard very loudly and needed to ring out
with great resonance...I frightened the audience and that's what I wanted to do, that's what I had to do because people like that are frightening cause they carry all the rage of the world and then their potential for danger and for destruction is enormous and we've put them there because our society doesn't care...".

In a happier vein, Natalie recalls playing a woman of both deep sadness and enormous courage and inner beauty. Such a character needed to be communicated as she reflected the lives of so many people. In describing this character's life Natalie states: "...I think that's a very fair and common picture for all men and women, women and men, so she's a very important character, she performs a very important, reflective function".

Through challenging audiences and reflecting human realities, some actors hope to somehow make a difference to the lives of those who come to watch their performances. In recreating the life of the character with truth and honesty the actor hopes to affect the audience, even to the point of having a positive and healing impact. As Natalie, again, explains: "...when I can recall it and recreate it for them then in many ways I am performing a function, I am initiating a function in them (the audience) that they have to then take the ball and run with...it opens up a little something inside of them and that's what my job is all about...theatre provides a very important function in society and that is that you become almost the medicine, a part of the cure...". As a concrete example, Natalie found that one character she played resonated so deeply within the lives of some women audience members that it served as a catalyst in causing them to make changes in their deeply unhappy lives: "...I've had women come up to me...and they have left their domestic situations because they were so foul, and because of his role. So that's pretty powerful isn't it". For Deborah, her abhorrence of dishonesty of any kind has led her to relish roles which promote truth and honesty in the hope that verbalizing what is kept secret and revealing what is shamefully hidden will help others: "...I want to say true things in public places. I hate lying and I mean that in the broadest sense...I actually feel physically ill when I see people doing things that I know to be wrong and hurtful...I guess I do have a mission which is to say true things in public places...". In playing a character who places all others before herself and gets little support from her family, Deborah feels the presentation of such a story is important: "If I'm going away to tell a play about a woman who's served everybody else and everybody else gets to be in the spot light and everybody else gets to have the most
important day of their life except her...then maybe that's a good thing because the real shut-ins may never
get to the play but a lot of other people might benefit...".

In performing a social function, some actors hope that, in reflecting with truth and honesty the lives
of the characters and in communicating the central issues and "lessons" offered, they will challenge their
audiences and even play a role in the healing and changing of personal and societal difficulties.

**Actor as Reflector of Experience**

While actors speak of reflecting experience in order to instruct and spur people to greater awareness
and action, actors also speak of reflecting the lives of others in order to touch them at a deeply personal
level, to offer them characters with whom they can relate and find a sense of connectedness. In this way
the actor becomes an "everyman" or "everywoman", offering experiences in which people truly see
themselves reflected and represented.

At times actors must find the courage to show the emotions others are too fearful to express. In
doing so actors can assist others in getting in touch with such feelings. As Victoria explains, audiences
find the expression of vulnerability compelling to watch onstage as it echoes their own experience: "...I
always thought if I showed my vulnerability people wouldn't like me because I'd be thought of as weak
when in fact...it takes a lot of courage to show that truth...there's a part of us that is yearning for some
understanding. That vulnerability is something as an actor you have to have...that's what makes people
want to keep watching". Natalie talks of the importance of getting in touch with the tender, vulnerable
part in everyone that is symbolically child-like: "I was intrigued by the idea of how important it is for all
of us, regardless of what kind of profession we have, to be able to don the mask, cause it takes putting the
mask on first of you know, symbolic, but to be able to go back to what it was like to be a child, cause
really that's all it is, is the child's voice crying in all of us...". In expressing other common emotions found
in human experience, actors offer opportunities for affirmation and validation. As Natalie recalls in
playing a woman of low social status: "...that's about remembering what it's like not to be noticed, to feel
that you're not as good as anybody else, that you're not beautiful enough, that you aren't bright enough,
that you're not rich enough, that you belong to a strata of society that you don't want to really be in
because you think you could be better than that but you lack the resources...that struggle I think is a very
common and accessible struggle...". Similarly, John describes a particular classic character as
possessing qualities present in everyone because "there's nothing sadder than unrequited love, we've all been there, we've all been in love with someone who didn't know and that's a painful thing of giving love and not getting any back...". Sarah describes a particular character she played as standing out for her "because of the impact the play had on the audience" and suggests this happened because "it's a play about love and forgiveness and that's something we can all relate to". As an actor, Sam sees his role as one in which he must reflect the archetypes which the characters represent, as it is in universal archetypes that people recognize elements of themselves: "...plays tend to work in archetypes; though they're very personal, the key to a good character is to make it absolutely unique and personal but to have all the reverberations of the archetypes so that anybody can recognize themselves in them...it's what witchdoctors do and it's what actors do". In this last statement Sam acknowledges a connection with a long standing tradition of actor-as-healer, who represents the forces of life and presents them in tangible, archetypal forms which are performed and enacted for others. In this way people's core experiences, emotions and perceptions of the world are confirmed and made understandable. In carrying out this role, actors are helping to fulfill the emotional and spiritual needs of others. As Victoria concludes: "I think if we can imitate human nature, portray human nature correctly, it's a beautiful gift to be able to show people who we are, to mirror what we are".

Often actors must simply trust that the audiences are benefitting in the ways hoped for but there are times when the actors know for a fact that people have been affected by the performances given. In playing a woman dying of cancer Jean reflects: "People who stuck it out seemed to be cleansed by it...it helped a lot of people, in the very realism of it, who had gone through it". For John, the times when he has known he somehow impacted people in new ways are especially rewarding: "There's nothing more enjoyable for me than to take audiences to a place they haven't been, bring them there, touch them in a new way. And people do remember those things, people still talk about (two characters I did), they were moved by those experiences. And we all remember what has affected us the most whether it's songs or places... it becomes part of the history of people's lives". For Sam, the discovery that humour is an important part of life that everyone could do with a little more of, led him to using it in a beneficial way: "I've learned being an actor and comedian, you can help people, comedy can do that". For Darlene, a vastly different but equally rewarding experience, in which an autistic child responded to theatre where
nothing before had worked, showed her the incredible power theatre holds. In this case she knew she played a healing and helpful role in opening up a new world for another human being.

Thus actors describe themselves as important reflectors of human experience in which they play truthful and meaningful characters with whom audiences can relate. In doing so actors hope that these spectators will see themselves represented and their experiences validated. As has been revealed, sometimes actors receive tangible proof that these hopes have been realized.

General Verdict: Actor as Spiritual Guide

It was Sam who noted the connection between the role of the witchdoctor and that of the actor, acknowledging the fact that actors, through playing characters, represent archetypal forces of life and human nature which, when performed for others, provide a confirmation and validation of common feelings and experiences. In continuing with this theme, other actors also comment upon experiences when they, as actors, felt a part of something greater and larger than themselves, and when they felt that their connection with their audiences took on a deeper, even spiritual significance.

For Darlene experiencing this deeper level of significance involves knowing that something of beauty has been created which has affected others in a meaningful way: "...there's a sense of discovery, there's a sense that you have gone through a gestation period, you have given birth to something that's valuable. The most important part is that you've touched people and I think the moment you touch another human being you change them ever so slightly and maybe it's just changing a perspective, an optic, a thought, or looking at something more fully, and that's why I do this; that, and the communication with the actors I work with, but through that to move the world". Victoria also describes similar moments of knowing when she is truly "touching" or "moving" those around her: "...it feels like they (the audience) are all of a sudden right there, you can really tell. That's when you know you're doing your most truthful work, and the truthfulness feels like you just can't get any more real or truer, the integrity feels so strong". Victoria compares this to feelings she has had after watching a performance, herself, in which the kind of integrity she values was present: "Sometimes you come out of watching a really true performance and you feel like you can do anything...you really feel inspired". Jean describes powerful moments of truth on stage as "the nights when the God is with you, when you can't take a step wrong, you can't take a breath wrong...". It is in moments of truth such as these that the actor "can draw the audience to the moments of
understanding so they'll open themselves up". Like Darlene and Victoria, Jean attempts to define the moments when there is an almost spiritual joining together of actor and audience which can be likened to giving birth, discovering moments of profound understanding, or reaching a moment of absolute truthfulness in performance: "...it's like 'ahh' as you recognize, you can actually feel the audience do that when you do something or when something comes together and they recognize it, they go very still and they breathe with you - so you experience their discovery, you lead them to it but when it happens you do it together, these are the miracle moments at work".

Jean has the most to say regarding the spiritual nature of acting, though other actors echo similar sentiments. In performing characters, Jean refers to a responsibility in ensuring that the spirit of the character shines through. In playing one character who was facing death, she recalls the necessity of truly facing death herself: "...if I didn't do that then the glory of this woman would not have shone, people would not have been moved and their spirits made both joyful and sad having met this woman". As Jean describes, the results when the spirit of the character is revealed can be deeply and spiritually meaningful: "...it was meaningful in people's lives and it was an experience they wanted, they wanted to be moved and they wanted to work hard and to be challenged and to participate in something as amazing as this woman's life - and death. So this was astonishing, I mean one lives in the belief that this is so all one's life in the theatre and yet it's a miracle each time it happens...maybe this is God, maybe God is what happens between people...". As part of this spiritual experience, a performance must not only reveal the spirit of the character but provide the release of the spirit by the end for all involved - character, actor, and audience: "...the release of tragedy is pity and terror but having lived through it there is the release of the spirit" (Jean). This release comes through a sense that the deeper meaning and purpose of the play and characters have been found and revealed to the audience; that somehow the actors and audience have been enriched by sharing in a journey together which in the end is a spiritual experience: "...there has to be for me the spirit, the good...weaving the thing into a tapestry that is recognizable and has some beauty to it". For Jean, acting becomes a sacred trust in which she must pursue values of goodness and integrity as she enters into relationships with characters and audiences: "...acting is the pursuit of the good, and I live in the faith that it is the pursuit of the good...". Jean later adds: "...I do find that I insist that theatre is a spiritual journey, that I insist that it is the pursuit of the good or else I can't do it". In that sentiment
Sam concurs: "...there has always been a sense of personal importance about it (acting), spiritual importance, this was important for me to do".

Relevance of Culmination or Movement of the Whole to Drama Based Therapies

This section has focused on the relationship between the actor and the larger world, and the connections actors experience in relation to principles and forces higher than themselves.

In seeing the role of the actor as messenger, agent, reflector of experience, and spiritual guide, it is apparent that, for some actors, the job of portraying characters is enormously important, deeply meaningful, and even a sacred "calling". Actors are communicators or messengers of ideas, giving themselves over to being instruments of the playwright's message. They are reflectors or mirrors of society and continue the traditional art of storytelling. The feeling that one has been "chosen" to be a communicator of ideas to the world and to fulfill a need in society and in people's lives gives an enormous strength of purpose for some actors. As agents, actors see themselves as performing an important educational function and even assisting in remedying problems and difficulties existing within human experience. As an agent for change, the actor challenges people to move beyond limited attitudes and narrow confines of "acceptable" behaviour. In accurately and truthfully representing human experience actors present people with realities they would often prefer to ignore and hold up a mirror to reflect the world back to itself. As agents actors hope to challenge others and make a difference, to have a positive and even healing impact through playing characters that cause people to think and question. As reflectors of experience actors touch others at a deeper level, offering characters with whom people can relate and find affirmation. Actors experience the satisfaction of helping to fulfill the emotional and spiritual needs of others through presenting characters of common emotions and archetypal experiences; people's emotions, thoughts, and perceptions and larger forces of life are represented and made tangible, even understandable. As spiritual guides, actors experience feeling a part of something greater than themselves. In creating something of beauty and coherence that touches others they come in contact with a sense of meaning on a larger, even more spiritual, level. At times there is a joining together or synthesis of actor and audience as they together discover and share moments of emotions, revelation, and understanding. Actors as true guides also feel a sense of responsibility in ensuring that the spirit of the character shines through and that a release of the spirit is provided for all involved, this release coming
from a sense that the deeper meaning and purpose of the play and characters have been revealed. Actors, in describing this connectedness to forces and principles higher than themselves use words such as truth, integrity, goodness, beauty, sacredness, and spiritual importance to capture these experiences.

The links between these culmination experiences and the three therapies are less immediately obvious than some of the previous sections. However, two important themes emerge which are worth exploring in both acting and drama-based therapies, one of connectedness to others and to the world in general, and the other, one of meaning and spiritual fulfillment.

Psychodrama

In Psychodrama an individual is defined by his or her interactions with others. The purpose of this therapy is to assist individuals in expanding, altering, and enhancing their roles in life. This is accomplished through re-creating scenarios very close to those in real life. Clients act out life experiences, critical events, and relationships in order to reach resolution and learning. The fact that individuals are drawing upon material from their own lives and focusing on those interactions and relationships which have given them the most difficulty creates the potential for deeply meaningful experiences. New or altered roles can be realized but, as well, what truly matters to individuals, what they value and what they lacked or lost can emerge in this setting and, as in acting, it is possible to play out "what never was but should have been", as well as to rehearse what "might be" in the future. In such experiences feelings of completeness, truth, and integrity, which actors identify, can potentially be captured within psychodramas. In fostering creativity, spontaneity, and expression, the goals of role flexibility may be reached but, as well, an individual may be freed up to truly get in touch with what matters to him or her and what is truly inhibiting a sense of connectedness with others. As the altering and changing of role relationships takes place within a group setting, the group is seen as a powerful factor in facilitating change. Actors speak of a sometimes miraculous joining together between actor and audience in which both, together, discover moments of emotion, revelation, and understanding. The audiences in both settings provide support and bear witness to pain and the struggle for change and as Moreno (in J.D. Moreno, 1989), the founder of Psychodrama, said "love and mutual sharing are powerful, indispensable working principles in group life" (p.50). For some people, such as some of the actors interviewed, connecting with others at a deeper level, making a difference to the larger world, and
feeling a part of something larger than oneself are important. In Psychodrama it is possible and seems most fitting that such sources of meaning and purpose should have the opportunity to emerge, be identified, and find affirmation through Psychodrama as, after all, this therapy involves the enacting of life and relationships.

**Drama Therapy**

Drama Therapy also focuses on increasing the effectiveness and selection of roles through group interaction. In using loosely structured dramatic exercises through which elements and the general "style" of ones personality emerge, it is also possible that that which is meaningful and important to an individual can also come through. Improvisational techniques and other dramatic activities which are used as projectives call upon inner ideas, memories, and images as material. Everything that is created, therefore, has unique and important meaning to the person. While it is important to identify impasses and difficulties which need to be addressed, so can areas of potential meaning and fulfillment be uncovered, expressed, and affirmed. In Drama Therapy daily reality and imagination are combined together to create a different kind of reality that transcends the ordinary. In such a setting what is new and possible are ideally free to emerge. At moments of aesthetic distance the individual, ideally, can both experience and make sense of his or her situation at the same time and that which has been unconscious or not immediately available to one's understanding finds expression through aesthetic means. That which is disruptive and problematic in roles and relationships need attention but opportunities exist, and actors attest to the importance of, finding that which gives meaning and a sense of purpose to the individual.

**Fixed-Role Therapy**

According to George Kelly, the psychologist behind Fixed Role Therapy (FRT), human beings are always in the process of attributing meaning to their experiences. As a result they form constructs or hypotheses which assist in predicting and responding to events. The aim of FRT is to improve construct systems and return them to predictive effectiveness. An experimental experience, in this case taking on a new role, is designed to offer new ways of being in the world and possibly new perspectives to assist the individual in altering and improving core constructs. While some of Kelly's terminology suggests a somewhat clinical and scientific approach, core personal constructs can also be seen as definitions of that which is meaningful to an individual, whether dysfunctional or productive. That which drives and
motivates an individual as well as that which is causing difficulties need to be identified before role sketches can be created. Enacting a new role in FRT is as much an experiment in meaning as it is the testing of new perspectives or different ways of dealing with interpersonal relationships. Trying to be someone else may open the individual to new possibilities; it may also cause what is centrally important and potentially fulfilling to come forth.

The experiences of actors in this final culmination section highlight that, for some, making a difference to the larger world, connecting with others at significant level, feeling a part of something greater than themselves, and carrying out relationships and professions of purpose and meaning are core areas of importance. While not everyone seeks these elements in their lives, the three therapies reviewed could possibly be developed further to address the possible needs of some clients to discover that which is meaningful, full of personal purpose, and spiritually fulfilling. Central principles of truth, integrity, goodness, beauty, and sacredness are hard to define and tangibly incorporate into therapeutic approaches but the experiences of actors attest that such principles are important and possible to access through dramatic means.
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Results

This study has attempted to answer the central question: "What is the experience of actors who have been personally affected by the characters they have played?" Other related questions were also contemplated such as: "How exactly are actors personally affected?"; "What must be present in this experience to facilitate such a result?"; and "What does the nature of this experience have to offer our understanding of human nature and processes of change?". While it is difficult to answer these questions unequivocally, the actors' interviews yielded much which contributes to an increased understanding of this experience. The structure of the narrative analysis was dictated by the interview material itself, and a dialectical framework was utilized to further illumine what was found and to provide a theoretical context. The use of this dialectical framework, however, evolved from the information which emerged and a central conclusion of this study which can be drawn is the value of using a dialectical structure in furthering understanding of the acting experience. The overall results will be summarized here, including the ways in which a dialectical framework can be supported. As well, where possible the published testimonies of other actors, reviewed in the earlier literature review, will be used to support this study's findings.

Context

In establishing the context of the acting experience, both dramatic and life historical contexts were reviewed, thereby also establishing the contexts for the dialectical structure involving actor and character. The dramatic context involved components of the theatre such as the play, rehearsals, and performance, relationships with directors, fellow actors, the character, and audience, and "externals" such as costumes, makeup, and theatre sets. The life historical context, as affirmed by the actors' testimonies, involved the essential presence of the actor's own frame of reference, background experiences, life history, and unique configuration of meaning. Actors related instances of bringing forth past experiences which were triggered by the character, of early experiences in life being formative in shaping the relationship they were to have with theatre itself, of the acting process being impacted by current life experiences which facilitated or hindered the playing of a character, and of issues related to an actor's health and emotional well-being which affected the playing of a character. Actors, themselves, acknowledged the interdependency
between their own lives and the characters they assume, and also included theatre-related experiences and the accumulation of past roles they have played in the make-up of their own unique life contexts.

**Structure**

The context just described "sets the stage" so to speak for the dialectical relationship between actor and character. The use of this dialectical structure was supported by the actors themselves who identified the presence of these two poles in the acting process and the experience of merging them.

The importance of the actor was affirmed by actors' descriptions of bringing forth from within themselves what was needed for a role. For some this was a continual process and happened for each character. Often that which was needed came from an emotional realm and actors were able to take related emotions and use or expand them without necessarily having to have had the character's experiences. Actors even found themselves utilizing personal pain and difficulties as material for a role and sometimes discovered elements within themselves they did not know they had. They described knowing when a role was "right" for them to play and when they had to let a role pass by because they did not have what was required from within. In returning briefly to the earlier literature review, in which published testimonies of other actors were outlined, the central presence of the actor in the acting process was also supported. Those actors identified the importance of "the self" in developing a character and spoke of the personality and inner life of the actor as being fundamental to the creation of roles of depth and honesty. For these actors revealing aspects of one's inner most self and opening up closely guarded elements of one's personality were necessary in order to firmly root the character from within and make a role a living entity.

The character was also supported as the other pole of the dialectic. Actors spoke of the necessity of entering into the world of the character in order to bring it to life. Understanding the character's background, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions was necessary even if they were different from those of the actor. Actors relayed experiences in which they had to truly face what the character was facing in order for the integrity and truth of the character to be revealed. Those actors' published testimonies covered in the literature review also supported the central presence of the character itself, in some cases suggesting that it is normal and reassuring for the character to become a major focus in the actor's life. In
giving themselves over to the character somewhat, actors could be more assured that a truly "alive" and well established character was in place.

The actors had the most to say about the merging of actor and character. This challenge embodied the dialectical process itself and formed the central task of the actor. Actors suggested a kind of union, coming together, and bridging of the two poles which were necessary as the two had to co-exist in order to form a truthful, living, and solidly grounded character. The actors described seeking commonalities and ways of identifying with the role. Often they were able to do so due to the universality of the emotions and experiences involved. As part of forming a relationship with the character actors identified both similarities and differences between themselves and roles; this offered both a connection and a challenge, and in the process actors often formed a special bond with their roles, describing feelings such as respect, caring, compassion and possessiveness towards them. Due to the dialectical process which required both entering into the world of the character as well as drawing upon one's inner self, actors described a certain sense of caution in choosing what roles to play, what "journeys" to take, and what to "give life to". Actors identified and described the merging process using words such as: "two-fold process", "journey", "crossing over", "bridging", and "nights when the god is with you". In the case of one actress an imbalance existed in which she, earlier in her life, allowed characters to "take over" and her roles were not anchored within a solid sense of self. In terms of her own dialectical process the two poles had not found an effective balance and it was not until she was able to bring more of herself to her characters that she truly created rich, vital, solid character portrayals. This case example argues for the balancing and co-existence of both poles within a dialectical relationship rather than the unbalanced domination one; both are interdependent and necessary to the other. In returning to the literature review and other actors' published testimonies, the merging of actor and character was identified there as well. Those actors described the exhilaration of being "at one" with both oneself and the role, and of combining character with the "vibration" of one's personality. The effective blending of actor and character seemed to be a mark of success and these actors took pleasure in both "giving voice" to who they were and "being somebody else" at the same time.

Once the character was formed actors were faced with the actual "doing" or performance of the role. Actor and character had to co-exist often for extended periods of time. The challenge in maintaining this
dialectical relationship became one of defining the levels of intimacy and separateness. At one extreme actors described experiences of separation, distance, and control, at the other end of the spectrum they related experiences of non-distinction in which boundaries dissolved and the actor felt in some senses "possessed" by the role.

In experiences of separation, actors drew a clear distinction between role and character and emphasized the necessity of maintaining a separateness. While it was important to sufficiently experience the character's world in order to represent it truthfully, it was equally important that the actor retain a sense of distance. Actors relayed moments of observing themselves as actors on stage as well as experiencing an ongoing internal presence of actor, character and observer who monitored one's performance. Rather than diminishing the result, some actors believed a healthy distance ensured the ability to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of performance. Published testimonies of actors' experiences, outlined earlier in the literature review, also indicated the presence of distance in the actor/role relationship. Actors who were consciously aware of themselves as separate from characters were in control of the process. While a level of merging was welcome, there was a limit as to how far this should go and how much impact upon the actor a character should be allowed to have.

Distinction also emerged between an actor's "real" life and "stage" life. Actors described the importance of limiting how much one brings one's personal life to the stage; "reality" can be taken too far. The ability to separate personal and professional life for some was equated with emotional health and actors could not sacrifice too much of themselves for the sake of a role.

At the other end of the spectrum lay experiences of "non-distinction" in which actors attested to little or no separation between actor and role. This often took place in unusual situations such as circumstances in which the experiences of the character somehow paralleled with those of the actor. This created for the actor, in some cases, a strong and emotional connection to the role and made it more difficult to retain distance. An example of this was Deborah's powerful experience in which she overwhelmingly identified with a character experiencing the breakdown of a marriage with the circumstances uncannily similar to Deborah's own personal history. Difficulties were also encountered if the experiences of an actor and character were strongly opposite, for example if an actor was going through a personally painful time but was required to play a happy or humourous character. Experiences
of non-distinction also seemed to be triggered by instances in which actors extensively played themselves within a role. This fostered a sense of vulnerability and it ceased being possible for actors to hold the character up as a "shield" separate from themselves. In one extreme case example, in which one actress actually played a character based on her own life, a sense of separateness was impossible. Generally, playing "oneself" within a role seemed, according to the actors interviewed, to be a risky and sometimes remarkable experience but generally something to be wary of; retaining the protective quality of the character seemed to be important and that required that it be separate to some extent from the actor.

Non-distinction was also experienced by those actors who, to a greater or lesser degree, felt "possessed" by their roles. For some, the invasion into their personal lives was a normal part of the acting process which ended when the character ceased being performed. For some, as well, the strong presence of the character was reassuring and protective, making facing the public easier. For a few actors "being" someone else was sometimes preferable to being themselves and in the case example of Kathy, possession experiences marked the earlier part of her life and career until she developed a stronger sense of self and ceased allowing her characters to completely take over. For others the element of physical transformation and loss of a recognizable former self seemed to be quite enjoyable and exhilarating overall, though sometimes disconcerting to other individuals (non-actors) who were uncomfortable with those who could transform and alter themselves so completely. Those actors whose published testimonies were recounted earlier in the literature review also attested to the strong presence of characters in their lives. For most, this was a matter of degree; at one extreme actors described a kind of overwhelming obsession where one literally "became" or surrendered to the role. For others the essential nature and intensity of rehearsal and performance facilitated a strong presence of a character in an actor's life which was normal and necessary. A character "taking over" to some extent was comforting and reassuring to actors who could then feel safe and secure in the knowledge that the character had been discovered and firmly established.

As actors used their inner selves to give life to their characters it was not surprising that it was sometimes difficult to remain immune to the power of some roles and to retain a balance between distance and intimacy.

Necessary to the actor/character relationship was the final step of leavetaking. The actor had to leave a character in order to move on to another. Acting became, at this stage, an act of letting go and
moving on. For some actors the character quickly faded but for most some kind of trace of the character remained in the form of pieces, memories, ghosts, or old friends. In the case of Kathy, the lingering presence of past characters lessened as she gained a stronger sense of her self and as her need of their assistance lessened. These traces which remained with the actors formed the residual effects of the dialectical process. The maintaining of the relationship and the tension involved in balancing intimacy and separateness were released and actors were left with what that experience gave and meant to them.

**Dynamics of the Structure**

The testimonies of the actors interviewed also supported the existence of certain factors necessary for the dialectic between actor and role to be accomplished. In considering what it is that makes the dialectical relationship effective, important, and memorable, actors identified essential and dynamic elements which assisted them in sustaining and gaining from the experience. The factors reviewed address how the dialectic is accomplished and what must be present in this process.

Actors identified unique, individual approaches to developing characters which they found personally effective and it is important to acknowledge that there were personal differences in what "works". Some central common themes, however, did emerge, one being the importance of various sources of knowledge and information. It was often impossible for actors to have all that was required for a role within themselves. Research and observation provided rich information which actors may have lacked. Observing others as well as researching areas of life, human nature, and human activity added to an actor's knowledge and added foundation to the character being developed. Actors described becoming sensitized to images, behaviours, and aspects of life which they had not been aware of before, all because of what a certain role required. Actors' published testimonies covered in the earlier literature review also affirmed the importance of seeking out material which was absent from one's inner repertoire. Actors never stopped observing and "trying out for size" the behaviour of their of fellow human beings and became attuned to those aspects of the surrounding world which filled in the gaps of knowledge, understanding, and experience they needed for a role.

Actors also relied upon knowledge that had accumulated over time, in particular, past acting experiences which formed a repository of roles which could be called upon in the future. Over time, therefore, an actor had more and more to bring to each new character. Again, actors in the published
accounts, reviewed earlier, also supported this same theme of accumulated experience in which the ability to "try on" new and different characters expanded over time which in turn created an ever increasing expansion of one's personality.

The presence of "significant others" and the relationships actors formed with these individuals emerged as crucial to the dialectical process. Actors were greatly impacted by those with whom they worked. In the case of the playwright, some actors saw their central role and mission as that of delivering the playwright's message. The quality and content of good writing made a huge difference to the acting experience, as it was the script which hopefully offered valuable information, insights, and clues to a character's personality. What the playwright had chosen to include in the content of the play (ie., romance, conflict, violence etc.) also affected the course of the acting experience. In one powerful case example, Jean described an instance in which the overriding presence of the playwright interfered with the dialectical relationship between her and the role. Symbolically the playwright was present in the form of unresolved issues and problems of his own which he placed upon the character, and physically he was present watching over the entire production, not realizing that he stood in the way of Jean developing a relationship with the character. As a result Jean felt she was carrying both the character and playwright with her throughout her performance.

Actors had the most to say about the director as this role guided the dialectical process. As actors attested, good directors could set careers in motion as well as facilitate the discovery of a particular role. They assisted actors in entering the world of the character, accessing what they needed from within, and the crucial process of merging the two. They possibly had insights the actor did not, ensured the emotional safety and security of the acting experience, assisted in the surmounting of blocks or imbalances, provided much needed support, and could act as the catalyst for a deeply meaningful experience. "Bad" directors could destroy the dialectical process and undermine an actor's sense of well-being. Actors related being sent in wrong directions, having their confidence undermined, being forced to emotionally risk without sufficient safety, and having their range of experience limited by directors of limited understanding, experience or ability. Whether good or bad, the essential importance of this figure was undeniable and actors identified the need for someone to steer, guide, offer different perspectives, and
ensure a "safe" environment conducive to experimentation and necessary for the dialectical process to be fully explored and realized.

Actors could play the same role more than once and the experience was totally different largely due to the different fellow actors involved. The dialectical relationship between actor and role did not happen in isolation and was an interactive, interdependent process. The relationships with fellow actors were crucial in rehearsal and performance and the process of one actor could be greatly impacted by those of other actors, especially if these processes were at cross-purposes.

The outcome of the rehearsal process, in which characters were formed, was directed towards the audience who was an important judge as to whether the dialectical union had yielded an effective result. The relationship with the audience, which was introduced in the performance phase, guided and forced actors to alter and adjust their roles. This dynamic relationship offered support and validation important to the actor. An unusual case example involved Deborah who received enormous support, acknowledgement, and empathy from audiences which she, as an individual, benefitted from as she was experiencing an uncomfortable parallel between her own personal life and that of the role. The audience unwittingly managed to help her through a situation in which she found herself unable to distance herself from the character.

Risk was another central factor identified as being inherent in the dialectical process. Actors included words such as anxiety, fear, vulnerability, challenge, and discovery to describe this theme. Fear of the task ahead, fear of failure, fear of not being able to find what was needed to bring the character to life, and fear of not being able to form the necessary alliance between actor and character were all potentially involved in the task of character formation. While these fears and anxieties may have caused some discomfort they seemed to be connected to elements of experimentation, exploration, and openness which were all essential to discovering the character. Actors identified the necessity for risking and being willing to make mistakes to facilitate discovery. The willingness to take chances and risk failure were linked, as well, to the de-emphasis on over-intellectualization of the acting process or being too protective or overly controlled. There were elements of safety, however, which needed to be present in rehearsal and performance in order to make risking easier. A striking case example involved Darlene who risked enormously when a director required that she bring a great deal of herself to a role. Her feelings of
confusion, vulnerability, and loss of control were overcome through her faith in the director and a positive and sound rehearsal process. As she had already risked so much in the safe context of rehearsal, performance became a euphoric and remarkable experience; she was able to rely on the process established during the formation of the character. In addition, some actors experienced a sense of protection and freedom in simply playing a role other than themselves. They were able to take risks as a character that they had never imagined taking as themselves. As Victoria discovered, through playing a role based on her own life, being oneself in public without the facade of a character involved enormous risk and vulnerability. A different kind of vulnerability was experienced by Deborah who, in playing a role which paralleled aspects of her own life, had to risk emotionally in order to be true to the character. To convey the emotions of the character Deborah could not avoid connecting with her own which created, at times, a frightening and difficult experience. Though personally risky, Deborah felt enormous satisfaction in knowing she had remained true to the character and had survived the challenges it brought to her own personal life. Other actors similarly identified the necessity of using the vulnerability, fear, and anxiety to one's advantage. Vulnerability became a link to the audience, as it was a quality everyone could relate to, and fear could not be allowed to take over and dominate but had to be harnessed, used, and translated into a sense of challenge. Some actors even welcomed the risk and anxiety present in acting and the opportunity to step outside familiar confines. Dialectics existed within this theme as actors struggled to maintain a balance between a desire for success and a fear of failure, essential truthfulness and unnerving vulnerability, and overwhelming fear and an energizing sense of challenge. It was in overcoming the fear of failure and even allowing failure to happen that an actor found success, in allowing vulnerability that the truthfulness of the character was revealed, and through harnessing fear that a sense of challenge arose. While the inherent risks in acting could be uncomfortable, actors identified them as being central to discovery and inspiration. The published testimonies of other actors, outlined earlier in the literature review, supported this factor of risk. To those actors as well, fear and even dread could act as a spur or catalyst in increasing concentration and power. Actors needed to be able to withstand and even embrace a certain level of uncertainty and the "unknown" in order to discover the truth and depth of the character. Acting required the "suspension of will" and potential "disaster was welcomed as a challenge".
The final factor involved in the acting experience was that of commitment. This factor was crucial to sustaining the dialectical process through to the end. Actors described feeling a sense of commitment to principles such as truth and honesty, and to their characters and audiences. This led actors to seeking an emotional connection with and an understanding of a character. This commitment was not without cost as truly experiencing what a character was facing could demand much from the actor. Actors had to sometimes withstand painful and gruelling experiences to "get the message out" and therefore, understandably, spoke of carefully considering what roles or "journeys" to take. Involved in this commitment was a sense of responsibility, even possessiveness toward a role and a guarding of its integrity. Actors also spoke of a commitment to audiences which involved treating them with respect, maintaining an awareness of the ways in which they were being impacted by a role, and ensuring their emotional safety. This was achieved through actors offering their own vulnerability, through presenting characters of truth, as anything less would be insulting, through offering rather than forcing a particular characterization upon an audience, and through remaining aware of the responses they wished to evoked within their audiences. This general theme of commitment, respect, and dedication in portraying roles of truth and integrity was a driving force which seemed to sustain actors through difficult and challenging role relationships and acting experiences.

Outcome of the Process

In answering the question, "What is the experience of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played?", the way in which actors were been impacted by the experience embodies the outcome of the dialectic. Once the relationship with the character had been developed, sustained, and, finally, ended, the actor was left with the effects of that encounter. In looking at the outcomes of the process, two central areas emerged, one dealing with personal experiences and outcomes of individual actors, and the other placing actors' experiences within the contexts of their "life dramas", as the way in which actors were affected was significantly impacted by their life experiences.

Experiences of Personal Progression

In identifying experiences of personal progression, some actors were not aware of changes and effects until some time had past and perspective could be acquired. The first "outcome" which resulted from this study was that of "psychological investigation". This involved a sense of increased knowledge
and understanding concerning human nature and various aspects of human existence. Psychological insights were afforded through the opportunity of "getting inside someone else's head". Increased knowledge of previously unfamiliar experiences led some actors to new awarenesses, consciousness, and even compassion. This was evidenced by one actress who gained new understanding of the thoughts and feelings of a deeply disturbed child which resulted in an expanded sense of empathy for such individuals. Thus, entering the "minds" of other individuals satisfied the fascination some actors had with the human psyche and offered opportunities to examine relationships, social structures, historical events, complex ethical issues, as well as thoughts and feelings of individuals different from themselves. As a result some actors experienced an enriched ability to empathize and tolerate diversity and complexity.

The outcome of "discovery" involved the examination and illumination of aspects of the actors themselves. The playing of certain characters caused inner aspects to emerge which sometimes had been previously unacknowledged or unknown. Some actors examined issues from their own lives and, in testing or comparing themselves in relation to the characters, made new personal discoveries. Acting experiences afforded the opportunity for actors to learn of their own strengths and limitations, one example being Darlene's experience of filling in as an understudy in which she discovered capabilities of which she had not been previously aware. In a few instances characters facilitated deep exploration of an actor's life. This usually involved an unusual and strong identification or connection with the character. In one case example, Victoria played a role based on her own life which forced her to deeply examine aspects of her own life; as a result she embarked on an important therapeutic process. The role began that process and caused her to get in touch with previously unresolved emotions and issues. Characters, therefore, appeared to hold the potential for individuals to discover and explore their own inner selves. Often in seeking to portray characters of truth and depth, actors accessed and discovered truths within themselves. This outcome was further supported by the published accounts of other actors, as reviewed in the earlier literature review. These actors described "shining light" on inner aspects of themselves through characters and encountering opportunities to profoundly explore themselves. The process of developing a character served as a catalyst to inner exploration and actors identified the discovery of "many selves" or multiples dimensions of a singular personality. Through characters, then, it was
possible to discover a variety of inner personalities which had previously not had the opportunity to emerge.

The outcome of "expansion" differed from "discovery" in that it involved the addition of new experiences and elements to actors' lives as opposed to revealing what was already existing and present. In "being" another character, actors were able to experience new thoughts and emotions and came into contact with perspectives and experiences they would not normally have had. Playing roles which differed or contrasted from themselves moved actors beyond known and familiar boundaries to discovering new "territories". It seemed optimal, however, for characters to possess both qualities the actor could identify with as well as ones which differed so the actor could both connect with and be challenged by the role. Another element which a few actors identified was the reality of lost opportunities in which actors could have learned personally from roles but did not. Perhaps it is therefore beneficial to consider the previous outlined "dynamics of the structure" when creating an environment most conducive to positive experiences of discovery and expansion. Expanded learning also took place through the research, observation, and gathering of new skills involved in playing some roles. Actors observed others and gathered new perspectives regarding aspects of life to which they had previously paid little attention, gathered knowledge of emotions, experiences, behaviours, and skills, and sometimes explored a certain element or quality which they as individuals aspired towards. As an example, Darlene welcomed the opportunity to explore a character of deep courage as she wished to come closer to acquiring that quality within herself. Through characters actors realized there were different ways of understanding situations and more than one way of "finding the truth". Fundamentally actors identified having something "added" to their lives, an overall sense of enrichment in having come in contact with spirits and personalities of greatness. These characters, and the images, emotions, perceptions, and experiences they brought, were stored in actors' memories to be recalled when needed. In this way actors benefitted from an accumulation of experiences, gathered characters like "many friends" and were enriched by extending and expanding their own personalities. Published testimonies by other actors, earlier reviewed, also supported the existence of "expansive" experiences. As these actors reported, the very nature of the profession brought actors in contact with an unusually large range of experiences and emotions. Actors demonstrated the limitless possibilities of personality freed from circumstances and, through playing
characters, opened themselves to new "ways of being" and possibilities not previously known or realized. These actors also echoed the value of accumulated experience which increased the ability of actors to "try on" new and different characters, which in turn created an ever increasing expansion of their personalities.

A fourth outcome was that of "expression". Through roles, opportunities existed for actors to access and express their own emotions. Theatre, with it's sense of heightened reality and intensified emotions, by it's very nature, lends itself to being a forum and vehicle for expression. Actors expressed pleasure and satisfaction in playing characters which either reflected or brought forth qualities and feelings the actor wished to express. Sometimes characters offered qualities and emotions actors wanted to experience but which had been lacking or nonexistent previously in their lives. That being said, actors also acknowledged that there were instances in which undesired and disturbing emotions were accessed and introduced, resulting in less positive experiences. As well, sometimes it was hard to "turn off" emotions once they had been "turned on". The published testimonies of other actors, covered in the literature review, also supported the value of emotional release and expression in the acting experience. These actors identified the liberating experimentation and playfulness provided through the playing of characters and the expression of emotions which were not generally encouraged or accepted in daily life and society. As well, inner emotions which had needed expression could be released in a safe environment.

Continuing with this theme of safety, a fifth outcome or central element was that of a "safety factor" within which expression, expansion, and discovery could all take place. The inherent protection involved in playing someone other than oneself enabled actors to carry out actions which led to few real life consequences. Within this context of safety, actors were able to experiment and explore, and were open to new ideas and experiences. They had the opportunity to try on new roles, "be" other people, and then leave them behind. Therefore, inherent in the acting experience was the freedom to move beyond safe and familiar boundaries, follow spontaneous impulses, and test wide ranging ideas. In the dramatic world lay the opportunity to experiment and "play" in ways seldom afforded in day to day living. For some actors the task of appearing in front of others required the protection of a character, as that was less threatening than playing themselves. Of central significance, however, was the possibility actors identified for experiencing new ways of being. With increased exposure to new roles, perspectives, and possibilities, actors were introduced to new ways of perceiving and defining themselves.
In this study actors identified instances in which acting experiences carried over into their own lives. In some instances this took place during a production itself. Actors found themselves "living and breathing" the character and noted changes in their own day to day personalities. This changeability was not seen as negative but as something all of us as people do in different situations; actors simply try on and play different roles and personalities with greater frequency and intensity. Effects of characters were also felt after the actor finished performing them. A character's words and ideas were stored in an actor's memory and brought forth for future roles or for oneself. In one case example, Natalie used the words of a past character to assist her in communicating her own thoughts in a real life situation. In some instances tangible consequences have resulted from the playing of characters, and the feelings they have evoked, in the form of marriages and intimate relationships. A striking way in which acting experiences added to real life was in the form of rehearsal and preparation for future events. Through contact with certain emotions, relationships, situations, or struggles, actors sometimes found themselves better prepared for or familiar with similar experiences when they occurred in their own lives. In one example, Jean was better equipped to deal with the death of a very dear friend after having faced death so many times through the characters she had played.

Less tangible were the "peak experiences" actors identified as yet another outcome of taking on roles. Some actors described experiences which lifted them to a higher level of awareness and spiritual growth. Actors used words and phrases such as "magical", "spiritual", "creative", and "nights when the god is with you", to describe this phenomenon. Music for one actor was the key to entering into a sense of joy, an openness to learning, and a capacity to embrace one's inner "child". In another case example an actor encountered the transcendent through relinquishing control, risking, and trusting the process established in rehearsal. This actor described a kind of out of body experience and felt the presence of a "power" larger than herself. Actors described playing characters of inspiring spirit and courage, and the opportunity to "inhabit" such personas provided uplifting and meaningful experiences. One actress, Jean, emphasized the need for the release of the spirit meaning that, while pain and despair may need to be experienced, ultimately a role must offer an experience of truth, integrity, and a sense of things being woven into a whole, a tapestry that is meaningful and recognizable. In having access to characters of this sort actors
were able to experience a connection to their own spiritual selves. For some actors truly transcendent experiences were rare but acting in and of itself was a continual, spiritual experience.

A final experience of personal progression involved the area of "professional validation". Simply put, actors experienced satisfaction in doing something well. They described the rewards of truly capturing a character and giving it integrity, of fulfilling an important function, and of creating something of worth. A lot of their success was determined by the responses of others, namely whether the audience was responding, enjoying, or being impacted by the performance. In one case example, Darlene described the joy and immense satisfaction in having "reached" an autistic child through the medium of theatre. The playing of characters in some instances proved to actors they could go beyond the expectations of others and themselves, thereby increasing a sense of mastery and confidence. In one instance, an actor experienced a sense of purpose in being able to pass on her years of knowledge and wisdom to others in the profession, acting as a guide and mentor figure. In these examples actors indicate the essential need everyone has for experiencing a sense of accomplishment, success, mastery, approval, and discovery. Such experiences can increase confidence and a sense of self worth through having created something of essential worth and value.

Experiences of Life Drama

A second way that the outcomes of the dialectic can be understood is through using the concept of "life drama". The life historical context of an actor was not only involved in the creation of a character but was, in itself, then affected by the acting experience. In conveying how actors were affected by their experiences, it was impossible to ignore their own unique perspectives and what they brought to the experience. In many instances the meaning the acting experience had for the actor was very connected to the sense of life purpose, mission, and meaning that had been established by the actor's early experiences.

Four actors in particular supported this life historical context. Early experiences influenced Sam's decision to act. The necessity of "being heard", the importance of communication, and the enjoyment and learning he found in playing roles all gave Sam his sense of purpose and meaning in pursuing acting experiences.

Natalie also connected early experiences to her approach to acting. Her early sensitization to the pain of others led her to easily identify with her characters and to attempt to connect with and even
alleviate the pain of her audiences. Through an instilled need to help others she sought to create characters of truth, integrity, and inspiration. An early near death experience strongly affected her approach to her life and work. Risk taking and embracing the "unknown" came to mark her acting experiences and, in one particular instance, a character took her back to that earlier, positive close encounter with death and reinforced the mystical and spiritual knowledge and presence in her life; the sense that there are possibilities that lie beyond that which is known and familiar.

For Deborah, a powerful acting experience involved the direct parallel of events in her life, mainly concerning the breakdown of her marriage, with that of a character's. In order to play this particular character with integrity Deborah had to convey the emotional truth of the role and therefore could not avoid the corresponding emotions within herself. Painful memories and feelings she thought she had left behind resurfaced. In rehearsal she experienced a sense of isolation similar to the loneliness she felt during her marriage. Performance in contrast paralleled the period after the collapse of her marriage in which she received support, validation, and affirmation and experienced relief at being able to publicly "speak the truth". Through the dramatic structure of the play she was able to experience a sense of completion and resolution not generally present in real life and had the triumphal scene she had always wanted, in which her sense of injustice and emotional pain were acknowledged, the truth was spoken, and the underlying deceit and manipulation were identified and finally stopped. The audiences unknowingly became witnesses to Deborah's own pain and rejoiced with her when poetic justice and fairness won out in the end. With the audience supporting and caring for a character which so closely paralleled Deborah's own life, Deborah in fact was able to experience much of that support for herself. Though an enormously difficult and at times terrifying acting experience, Deborah emerged with a greater level of peace and resolution, a "new step of forgiveness". In playing yet another acting role Deborah became aware of another parallel between her own life and that of the character; this time the circumstances present in her own life, in anticipation of doing the role, paralleled elements in the life of that character. In making that connection Deborah gained insight into her own situation and drew strength from the potential role, which assisted her in making the decision to actually take on that character. Like Sam and Natalie, early life experiences affected Deborah's sense of meaning and purpose in her work. In coming from a family in which secrecy and deception were the norm, Deborah's mission in acting became to bare the truth publicly
and express honest and open emotions. In the two roles which paralleled her own life, Deborah was able to fulfill this mission; through her roles she had the pleasure of breaking the kind of silence, deception, and oppression which had ruled her own past.

Kathy's whole life was intertwined with the world of the theatre. As a child she used it to escape from her unhappy surroundings and was able to express aspects of herself in safety, which were denied and repressed in her own life. Thus her early experiences firmly established the role of theatre in her life as an important imaginary, "safe" world to which she could escape. As an adult she continued to live the imaginary lives of her characters while remaining fairly out of touch with any strong sense of her own self identity. While characters had given her the form of expression she had so needed and while she had long preferred to "give herself over" to her roles, she gradually became aware that for the sake of the characters and of herself she needed to more firmly anchor them within a strong sense of identity and to draw as much on her own suprisingly rich emotional life as on the imaginary life of the character. Acting continued to form the basis for this life long journey as, through characters, she was able to rediscover and give expression to aspects of herself. Where previously she had lived vicariously through her roles, she discovered she had emotions, qualities, and experiences to bring to her characters to bring them alive. Thus, in Kathy's case, her relationships with characters were closely connected to and charted her own life journey from escape to discovery.

Culmination or Movement of the Whole

As a final and ultimate outcome of the dialectical process, actors identified elements of meaning and purpose which appeared to be operating at a more profound and higher level. Beyond individual experiences of meaning lay common themes which centered on the relationship between actor and the wider world, the mission or role the actor played in society, and the deeper principles or values which guided the dialectical process itself.

In seeing "actors as messengers", actors saw themselves as the spokespersons for the playwright's message and a part of the important communication process of bringing ideas to the outside world. As messengers actors felt that they are carrying on a tradition of storytelling, of perpetuating myths and answering a human need for stories and narrative forms of communication. As messengers actors reflected society and the human condition and for some actors, acting had a sense of being a "calling',
something that had been bestowed upon them which enhanced the sense of purpose and importance of this kind of work. In carrying out an age old role that fulfills a need in society and in people's lives, actors sometimes felt a connection with something larger and more important than themselves.

The "actor as agent" reflected the meaning some actors derived from performing a societal function in which they attempted to educate, challenge, and even assist in the remedying of human difficulties. Some actors found enormous purpose in challenging others to step outside the confines of narrow attitudes and limited beliefs. Through roles, actors were able to present elements of life and reflect human experiences which many would prefer to ignore. They held up a mirror reflecting society back to itself, communicated ideas which may have lead others to think and reflect, and ensured that "voices" which needed to be heard and experiences which needed greater understanding were presented. Through challenging others in this way some actors hoped to make a difference, to be a catalyst for change, and to be part of the "cure".

"Actors as reflectors of experience" embodied a more personal and affirming relationship between actors and others. Through roles, actors were able to reflect the lives of others and affirm the truth of their experiences, thereby touching them in a deeply personal way. Actors showed emotions in public others were too fearful to express, assisting them to get in touch with their own experiences and feelings. In expressing sentiments and situations common to the human condition, actors provided affirmation and validation to others. Actors saw themselves as reflectors of common themes and archetypes within which people could recognize themselves. Similar to actor-as-healer in past cultural traditions, the actor still represented life forces in tangible forms, thereby fulfilling a need in others to have experiences affirmed and made sense of. As the actors reported, occasionally they were rewarded by clear and visible evidence that they had affected and made a difference to people's lives, that they had become part of their personal life histories.

In identifying "actors as spiritual guide", actors described experiences in which they felt a part of something greater than themselves and shared instances in which they felt a connection with audiences which took on a deeper, almost spiritual significance. Creating something of meaning and value which affected and touched others also gave actors an almost spiritual satisfaction; principles of truth, integrity, and beauty came through as significant elements of this experience. Actors described moments of feeling
the audiences "with them", where "things could not get any more real or truthful", "nights when the god is with you", instances in which actor and audience came to moments of understanding and discovery together. It was in this relationship between actor and others, this connectedness, that a sense of spirituality was found; "God is what happens between people", and the "release of the spirit" as one actress so strikingly captured, came from having lived through the pain, difficulty, or struggle to arrive at a place of meaning and purpose in which experience was created into something recognizable, meaningful, and understandable. In this way acting was "the pursuit of the good", was carrying out a kind of sacred trust, and was following guiding principles of truth, goodness, beauty, integrity, and meaning.

In conclusion, the actors' testimonies were enhanced and made more readily understandable through the use of a dialectical framework in which both dramatic and personal contexts, the existence of the two poles of the dialectic, the essential dynamics or factors essential to the dialectic, and powerful outcomes of the dialectical process were all confirmed and supported.
Limitations

As this study attempted to examine the nature of a particular experience, a methodology which would be flexible and open to what might emerge was utilized. A qualitative rather than quantitative approach was deemed appropriate in exploring a phenomenon which has been the subject of little research. The methodology itself emerged as much as possible from the actual "data" with the structure and process of analysis determined by the content of the material gathered. This was to preserve and communicate the actors' experiences in as true and authentic a manner as possible. Therefore, the central elements of traditional quantitative research are not present in this study; the formulation and subsequent testing of specific hypotheses would have premature in relation to the general nature of the research question, no variables were manipulated or controlled, no statistical analysis was performed, and it was not possible to outline the design and method ahead of time while remaining true to the desired intent for the methodology itself to emerge out of the material as much as possible.

Of concern is the area of reliability both in regards to the co-researchers and the interviewer. The reliability of the research instrument (the interviewer) has hopefully been increased through the interviewer being sensitive to and made aware of presuppositions regarding the phenomena; in this study this involved the review and understanding of three existing bodies of knowledge. However, the possible subjectivity of the interviewer exists and the quality of the results are dependent on the interviewer's ability to be positively involved in building a relationship with the co-researchers and facilitating the telling of their "stories", while refraining from adversely interferring with these personal accounts. In regards to the co-researchers, the reliability of the "data" is dependent, not on observable behaviour or "objective" data-gathering techniques, but on the co-researchers' ability to reconstruct and articulate their own experiences; abilities in these areas significantly vary. As well, while the relationship between interviewer and co-researcher is intended to foster openness, honesty, and a natural reconstruction of experiences, it is difficult to verify whether there are other motivations, such as a desire to please or impress, involved on the part of the co-researcher.

Generalizability of findings is a central limitation of qualitative/phenomenological research which is not resolved but accepted as a legitimate price to pay for research that is intimately tied to the phenomena (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988). Aspects of human experience are accessed in ways not possible
with more traditional empirical research approaches and results must be understood, then, within a qualitative framework. In this study having more than one co-researcher allows for some comparison across co-researchers and increases the strength of some generalizability. However, of more central importance in a qualitative study of this kind is capturing the individual’s experience "as lived" as accurately and truthfully as possible. Results must be regarded, then, as constructions, not as facts. In research of this nature results are seen as part of an ongoing discussion, dialogue, and even "dialectic" which extend, revise, and refine the description of a phenomena and investigate its significance in various ways (Cochran & Claspell, 1987). Results are not an "endpoint" but part of a continuing process of investigation.

It is also a possible concern that the results of this study emerged from an imperfect process of shaping the method of analysis from the material. Again, this was considered a lesser problem than imposing a methodology which might severely limit preserving and communicating the actors' experiences as authentically as possible. Hopefully validity has been strengthened by the inclusion of as many original statements as possible in the analysis sections to verify and support the process used, themes proposed, and statements made by the researcher. With sufficient original "data" provided it is hoped that the reader can determine for himself or herself the validity of the researcher's work. While one of the purposes of this study was to explore an area which has been the subject of little research, this reality also becomes a limitation as there is little with which to compare these findings. It is therefore difficult to increase the validity of results through placing them within a body of already existing research and knowledge. In this instance it was necessary to draw upon the related areas of psychology and theatre.

Studying the area of theatre in itself has some possible drawbacks. It is challenging to examine such an elusive subject which involves a great deal of unobservable phenomena. The experiences which emerge from theatre are both rich in depth and difficult to organize and analyze. Due to the elusive nature of this subject area and the particular methodology utilized it may also be difficult to reconstruct and duplicate this study or extract an exact "blueprint" which can be replicated to strengthen these findings. It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of transferring the experiences of actors to those of other individuals in other contexts. While the intent of this study has been to investigate what theatre has to offer to the realm of psychology, in particular, as this has been little explored, it is also true
that there is a limit as the extent to which the experiences of actors can be transferred to the therapeutic field, though the results of this study do suggest that the world of theatre does have much to offer to the greater understanding of human experience.

Finally, due to limits of time and scope of this study, it was necessary to restrict the number of co-researchers in this study. As well, there were more bodies of knowledge which could have been initially reviewed and would have further enriched by the findings of this study.
Implications for Theory and Practice

Implications for Theatre Theory

While the central purpose of this study has been to explore acting experiences and what they might have to offer to the understanding of human nature and to psychological theory and therapy, it is important to briefly consider the implications that the actors' testimonies might have for theatre theory, in particular those theories covered earlier in the literature review.

Stanislavski

Stanislavski's central focus upon making actors' actions as truthful and logical as possible can be compared to the testimonies of actors who spoke of the importance of truth and honesty in acting, of conveying the spirit and integrity of characters, and truly bringing them "alive". To do this, Stanislavski emphasized accessing the subconscious realm and finding those inner aspects complementary to those of the character. In truthfully portraying the character, the actor must seek to understand and experience the inner life of the role, and put himself or herself in the character's place; this hopefully will arouse the feelings necessary to truthfully play the part. One must live the role, fit one's human qualities to the life of the character, and experience feelings analogous to the role. This relates very closely to the two poles of the dialectic which actors in this study identified. The first "pole", the actor, involves the actor drawing what is necessary from within to bring the role alive; the second "pole", the character, requires that the actor enter the life of the role and experience what the character goes through in order to portray it completely and truthfully. The goal, according to Stanislavski, is a merging of actor and role, as both are interdependent and essential to each other. In this study, as well, the merging of the two poles of the dialectic was heavily emphasized by the actors. Stanislavski also cautioned against actors losing themselves in a role and encouraged an element of observation in acting. This parallels with "experiences of separation" in which actors in this study identified the necessity for distance and control in playing a role and echoed Stanislavski's opinion that an observer function in playing a role both ensures the presence of the actor's identity and serves a function in monitoring the quality of performance.

In facilitating the union between actor and role Stanislavski emphasized the use of emotional memory, "as if" experiences, observations, and a seeking of logic and coherence in actions of characters. In utilizing emotional memory, Stanislavski encouraged actors to draw upon their own emotional
reservoirs and experiences which correspond to the feelings necessary for a role. Through the conscious work of preparing, analyzing, and understanding the role, material from an actor's emotional memory naturally emerges. In this study actors identified utilizing their own experiences and feelings and, in the case of some, the emotional connections were so strong that they found distance impossible and encountered "experiences of non-distinction" between actor and role. For others, while identical emotions or experiences were not in their repertoire, they were able to take similar or lesser feelings and enlarge or expand upon them to fill the needs of the character. It is important to note that actors were sometimes surprised by their capacity to feel new emotions or access aspects of themselves they had not known existed before. It is also significant that actors not only discovered new aspects within themselves but were also introduced to new experiences through roles which served to expand and enrich their own repertoires. While drawing from within and identifying with the role out of one's own experiences are important as Stanislavski advocates, the actors in this study identified the possibility of being surprised and stretched by the role itself as well as being able to expand emotions or use them as "kernels" of knowledge from which to start. For material which is not within the actor's repertoire, the seeking of observations and impressions from the outside world is important according to both Stanislavski and the actors interviewed. Actors must continually build upon their knowledge of human nature life experiences. Through Stanislavski's "as if" the actor enters into the realm of what "could be" and entertains new possibilities. This triggers the imagination and leads to inspiration regarding the inner life of the role. An analogous theme present in the testimonies of the actors which can be compared is that of risking; sometimes it is necessary to move beyond what is safe and familiar into the "unknown" in order to be open new possibilities and to truly discover the depth and entirety of the role.

Brecht

Brecht's approach can be characterized by observation, objectivity, stylization, and distance. His intent was for actors to present a character much as they would if they were setting forth an argument or one alternative for audiences to consider. This was intended to ensure that actors and audiences thought for themselves and could consciously and critically evaluate the situations and relationships being presented. Actors must therefore avoid strongly identifying or fusing with the role to ensure that neither actor nor audience are put in a "trance" but are able to see the role objectively. Overpowering emotions
cannot overwhelm one's ability to see, think, and evaluate. While none of the actors in this study advocated an approach such as this, as all felt that the merging process between actor and character was important, Brecht's position can be linked to the emphasis some actors placed on the ability to distance from the role sufficiently to monitor the quality and effectiveness of one's performance. The thrust of Brecht's approach speaks to the aspect of the actor who remains removed and observes oneself in character. As well, concerning "outcomes of the dialectic", actors described the rewards of "psychological investigation" in which they were able to "get inside someone's head" and develop an increased knowledge and understanding concerning human nature. Such experiences satisfied the fascination some actors had with the human psyche and also offered opportunities to examine relationships, social structures, historical events, complex ethical issues, as well as the thoughts and feelings of other complex individuals. This kind of examination suggests a Brechtian quality of distance and observation in which the actor is sufficiently distanced from the character in order to appreciate the qualities and opportunities for learning the character offers. Characters, as actors professed, encourage the consideration of "many truths", an outcome Brecht actively sought. Brecht also emphasized a theatre of social conscience in which actors and audiences are forced to recognize social realities and alternatives. Actors must therefore possess a certain level of social consciousness as it is they who are representing the world and human nature. They must have, according to Brecht, a passionate concern for human progress. While not all actors in this study aspired towards social ends to this extent, it is interesting that the "culmination" of the dialectical process involved common themes which centered on the relationship between the actor and the outer world. Of these themes, "actor as agent" reflects the meaning some actors derived from performing a social function in society in which they attempted to educate, challenge, and even assist in the remedying of human problems. Through roles, actors found a sense of meaning in presenting elements of life and human experience which begged greater understanding and acknowledgment; they presented "voices" which needed to be heard.

**Brook and Grotowski**

Grotowski and Brook embody an approach which pushes theatre beyond comfortable limits. Acting involves challenging common and understood social behavior and communication, and theatre is a place of provocation in which actors strip away all barriers and limitations in order to give of themselves fully.
Words such as "provocation", "self penetration", "defenselessness", and "transcendence" all convey the powerful and at times extreme nature this approach involves. Actors give of themselves utterly and must be prepared to "reveal what is behind the mask" as, in order to be truly creative, risk and exploring the unknown are necessary. The possibility of failure is accepted and discomfort rather than inability, is seen as the main obstacle to creativity, as creativity is never comfortable. The qualities Brook and Grotowski represent, while somewhat extreme, can be linked to some of the results found in this study. In particular, the theme of risk which is involved in the "dynamics of the dialectical structure" reflects this necessity for actors to be willing to risk in the acting process as well as withstand feelings of fear, anxiety, and vulnerability in order to truly discover the depth and totality of a character. It is in translating fear into challenge and being willing to experiment, explore, make mistakes, and remain open to that which is new and unknown which are central to inspiration and success. Similar to Brook and Grotowski, one actor echoed their sentiment that actors are not meant to be comfortable all the time. One important qualifier however, is that actors emphasized the importance of a "safe" environment in which to risk, as was evident in the case of Darlene who did experience a truly remarkable and even transcendent performance through enormous risk and vulnerability; however, she was supported and guided by a solid and extensive rehearsal process which laid the foundation from which she could safely take chances.

Brook and Grotowski suggest that challenging pretenses, conventional norms, and limited forms of understanding involve a kind of stripping away of barriers which results in a state of defenselessness. In this state transcendence and discovery are then possible. Acting, then, becomes an opportunity for self revelation and self study; transformation is not only possible but expected. It is possible to relate some of the "outcomes of the dialectic" to this theme of revelation. Actors attested to outcomes of self discovery, self expansion, and peak or transcendent experiences which resulted from the portrayal of characters.

The transcendence and self revelation that Grotowski and Brook speak certainly appears possible through acting, though they are unusually direct in pursuing and promoting these outcomes. While Brecht possibly embodies an extreme of distance and objectivity, Brook and Grotowski seem to embody an extreme of risk, experimentation, and vulnerability. The testimonies of the actors in this study seem to support the existence and central importance of both these extremes but call for a balance; distance must be balanced with emotional involvement and giving life to a character; risk is essential and inherently
creative, within the context of a sufficiently safe environment; total defenselessness and giving of one self must be balanced with a retaining of one's identity and emotional health.

**Spolin and Johnstone**

While neither Spolin nor Johnstone promote a theory of acting, but rather created an improvisational approach which focused on exercises and games, the element of improvisation is often present in character development and many of their ideas can be related to results of this study. Spolin and Johnstone sought to recreate the spontaneity and imagination which can be found in childhood but which are inevitably suppressed by the learned inhibitions and cautiousness involved in becoming an adult. In freeing the imagination and removing barriers to spontaneity, the individual can truly experience the immediate world around him or her which leads to opportunities for growth and expression. Through an increased capacity for experiencing one is freed from old and limited frames of reference. Related to this theme is a de-emphasis on analysis and intellectualization as these are counter productive in encouraging immediate, uninhibited, and spontaneous activity. This relates somewhat to the factor of risk identified in the "dynamics of the dialectical structure" in this study. The willingness to risk failure, take chances, and embrace the "unknown" in acting potentially leads to the truest form of creativity and inspiration. A de-emphasis on an over-intellectualization of the acting process, a relinquishing of the need to control outcome, and an ability to relax the strong urge to protect one's vulnerability, can lead the actor to realms of new possibilities previously not within the range of his or her experience.

It is interesting to note that Spolin and Johnstone emphasize the importance of providing a "safe" environment in order for these improvisational exercises and experiments to occur. The fear of disapproval from others must be removed and an enormous emphasis is placed upon group cohesiveness, support, and interdependence. The strength of the individual depends on the strength of the group and one individual's attempts to control the process will cause it to break down. This relates to the emphasis some actors placed, in this study, upon the need for a sufficiently "safe" environment in which to risk. As well, in the "dynamics of the dialectical structure", the importance of significant others was evidenced through comments made concerning the crucial roles played by directors and fellow players in the acting process.

Spolin and Johnstone, themselves, emphasize the power improvisation, and the involvement in spontaneous, immediate experiencing, can bring and specifically identify the possibility for personal
growth and learning which can be transferred to real life. This relates to the outcomes which actors in this study identified of "personal discovery" and "personal expansion" in which contact with new experiences and the opportunity to experiment with new ways of "being" led actors to discovering aspects of themselves they had hitherto been unaware, and to adding experiences and new insights which had previously been outside their realm of understanding. While not the primary intent, the acting experiences described in this study as well as the theory of improvisation Spolin and Johnstone espouse, both suggest the potential for personal "expansion" and discovery through acting experiences.

In addition to gaining experiences which can be taken back into real life, Spolin and Johnstone identify the benefits of being able to depart from one's everyday existence and embrace the freedom to make mistakes, experiment freely, release one's potentialities, and be "masters of one's own fate". Similarly, actors in this study identified the value of the "safety factor" within which expression, expansion, and discovery could all take place. Similar to the environment necessary for improvisational exercises Spolin and Johnstone describe, the rehearsals involved in creating a character offer a similar opportunity for experimentation removed from the outside world. In performance itself there is an inherent protection involved in playing characters different from oneself. This quality of safety and protection ascribed by Spolin and Johnstone and experienced by actors in this study attest to the value of being able to depart from one's regular existence and "roles" played in daily life in order to be freed to new possibilities and experiences.

In conclusion, all four theatre theories reviewed contain within them elements and themes which are affirmed by the experiences of the actors interviewed. While no one theory was completely supported by all actors, they each offer approaches which actors seem to combine and draw from in order to create a unique and personal approach to acting. It also is evident that within each theory exists themes which parallel central elements identified by the actors in this study.
General Implications for Psychological Theory and Practice

The results of this study have indicated how actors are personally affected by roles they play and what conditions need to be present in order for a personally meaningful experience to occur. In moving beyond the scope of acting experiences alone, it is important to consider what these experiences might have to offer to the realm of psychology and the wider understanding of human experience. As was mentioned in the introduction to this study, the experience of the actor in character has been little explored and largely untapped in terms of what it might have to offer to the social sciences. While psychology has borrowed concepts and techniques from theatre, the theoretical possibilities of theatre have not been fully accessed. This study has attempted to enter one aspect of the theatre "world" and explore what the dramatic realm has to offer to the understanding of human and, specifically, therapeutic experience.

In the introduction to the analysis section of this study, the concept of the dialectic was introduced and then used to provide a framework with which to make sense of the "data". As was mentioned, countless examples of dialectics exist within daily life as well as in the theatre world. Theatre not only contains dialectics, which was evidenced by this study, but also, in reflecting the forces of life, mirrors the countless contrasting, yet interconnected, poles which exist in life itself. Ideally, the movement between the extremes of a dialectic, when sustained, result in something which is learned, created, or synthesized. In neither side "winning out" necessarily, the process of modification or mutual adjustment of both occurs, ultimately leading an individual toward an accommodation of contrasting realities and an outcome of illumination and new understanding. Certainly such an outcome was experienced by some actors in this study who sustained and moved between the two poles of self and role and who, in merging the two, successfully formed dynamic and "alive" characters and personally learned and "grew" as a result.

In drawing wider implications from the results of this study, each section of the analysis will be reviewed in terms of what it has to say concerning general human experience, the process of role-taking, and possible therapeutic applications.

Context

In the Context of the Dialectic section, the results affirm the importance of fully understanding both contrasting poles in order for balance and an outcome of success and insight to occur. While the character, for example, must be explored thoroughly in order for it to be portrayed truthfully, actors also
bring their own unique context based on past experiences and their own understanding of the world. In applying this reality beyond the realm of theatre alone, involved in any role taking situation is the acknowledgment and understanding of both dialectical poles, specifically, the contexts of both actor and role. In using role taking for therapeutic purposes, and in therapeutic settings in general, establishing and understanding the life historical context of the individual in therapy is particularly crucial to success.

Structure

The results from this section essentially confirm the existence of two poles in role taking and the concept of the dialectic was effective in describing this relationship between actor and role. Actors bring forth what is needed from within, utilize past experiences, even those involving pain and difficulty, draw upon their own emotions, and reveal innermost aspects of themselves. In any role taking experience an individual, consciously or not, will draw material from their own personal lives to breathe life into a role. In considering role taking for therapeutic purposes it may be beneficial for the individual to have some initial knowledge and insight regarding their own experiences, difficulties, emotions, and inner selves and some awareness of what they are bringing or wish to bring to a role, thereby also giving focus to the purpose and goals of the role taking exercise. It is also likely, and desirous, for the experiencing of a role to cause discovery in these personal areas to take place. It is interesting, however, that actors in this study spoke of certain characters feeling "right" because they knew that they had what was required from within to portray the character with truth and integrity. Actors also experienced personal satisfaction in playing characters that accessed within themselves emotions, thoughts, and ideas they wished to experience and express. In extending these results to therapeutic settings, in which role taking is purely for the benefit of the individual rather than for theatrical performance, it seems logical to reverse the emphasis and to focus more upon what the individual wishes or needs to access and explore than what is necessarily required by a role. Rather than the actor being "right" for the role it becomes important to seek the right role for the individual.

The results affirm that role taking not only involves accessing the inner life of the individual but also necessitates attention and consideration concerning the role itself; the individual must face the experiences involved in truly entering the "world" of the role and allow it to become a central force and presence in his or her life. As the actors in this study indicated, one result of this entry into the life of another is that
potentially the actor can be significantly affected by the experience. In considering role taking within therapeutic contexts, it may be important, therefore, for the individual to truly experience and enter into the world of the character in order for valuable outcomes of personal discovery, "expansion", and expression to occur. Merely "trying on" a role in a superficial manner may bring some benefits but the significance and depth of the personal outcomes seem to be linked to the depth of the role taking experience.

In the movement between the two poles of the dialectic, actor and role, a process of modification or accommodation takes place. In this study the central task of the actor was identified as the merging between and actor and character. A central way in which this took place was the seeking of commonalities or areas of personal identification which enabled the actor to relate to the role. In many cases the roles embodied emotions and experiences of a universal nature which could be recognized by both actors and audiences. It is also a reality that human beings generally seek a sense of connectedness, ways of identifying with others, and opportunities to share common emotions, thoughts, questions, and experiences, and that these elements contribute greatly to emotional health and well being. In considering role taking within a wide therapeutic context individuals must identify with a role in order to feel willing to give of themselves to a role as well as to allow the role to penetrate and impact their own lives. Therefore, it may be beneficial to seek roles which embody a certain universality of experience, or at the very least qualities related to the individual, so that it is possible for him or her to sufficiently engage and "merge" with the character, and experience a valuable sense of connectedness, validation, and well-being.

Actors appreciated a sense of challenge as well as affirmation in their role taking experiences. Sufficient similarities needed to exist to enable "merging" to take place but differences and less familiar elements were also important in providing learning and growthful experiences for the actors. Within a therapeutic context, therefore, elements new or less familiar to the individual should be present to offer a level of challenge which may facilitate change.

The necessity for balance was also emphasized by the actors in this study. Within the dialectic, one "pole" cannot overly dominate the other. Actors cannot absolutely control their roles and cause their own personalities to take precedence over the integrity of a created character; conversely, actors cannot allow a role to remove the unique qualities that they as individuals bring to a character. In any form of role
taking, including those therapeutic in nature, balance is essential. If a role too greatly dominates, the
realm of fantasy and symbolic reality may come to replace a solid sense of self identity. This is of
particular concern within a therapeutic context as the outcome should strengthen a sense of identity not
replace a secure sense of self with a fictitious role. As well, if an individual retains total control and does
not sufficiently embrace what the role has to offer, the potential benefit of that role will be minimized;
rather than simply "playing" a character, it may be necessary to allow the role to sufficiently "penetrate"
in order for it to have impact on the "self".

In merging role and actor one "task" identified by actors in this study was one of defining the level of
intimacy and separateness in the dialectical relationship. Again, a balance seems to be a primary and
important objective. Separateness offers the ability to observe oneself, monitor effectiveness, ensure a
sense of being in control, and is a way of maintaining one's identity. The distinction between one's "real"
life and the world of a character must be maintained and the possible benefits of playing a role should
never require an individual to sacrifice their emotional health and well-being. Especially in a therapeutic
setting, then, the presence of some distance is important. Actors describe instances in which separateness
gave way to various experiences of non-distinction. These experiences seem to be follow strong personal
parallels or identification with a role, or instances of intense vulnerability in which actors largely play
"themselves" in roles. As a therapeutic situation using role taking would likely aim to facilitate an
identification with a role in order for that role to have personal impact, it is important to acknowledge, as
the actors revealed, the possible accompaniment of intense emotion and potential experiences of non-
distinction. The emergence of important issues, feelings, and experiences can be effectively accessed
using role taking as a vehicle but some level of separation and a balance between self and role should be
facilitated and supported. In extreme experiences of being "possessed" by a role, again, some actors saw
a certain level of possession as a healthy sign that the role has taken hold and come alive. On a personal
level some actors enjoyed being other people rather than being themselves and found engaging with the
public easier through using the protection of being in character. In considering the use of role taking in a
broader context, the level and degree of "possession" needs to be monitored; it may be beneficial for a role
to take over to a degree but becoming "consumed" by a role or using it to avoid being oneself is not
desirable, especially in a therapeutic context.
Letting go of a role is also an essential task in this dialectical relationship. That which remains from the experience embodies what has been gained and can then be integrated into the life experience of the individual. Therefore it is important to ensure that the individual is able to leave a role and can then focus on the benefits and that which has been learned and which strengthens self knowledge and a sense of identity.

The concept of the dialectic, in capturing the relationship between self and role, is useful when considering role taking in wider contexts. It identifies both "poles" of role and individual, and embodies a shifting and movement between the two which ideally leads to accommodation and balance. While balance is not always consistent, as movement between poles will mean that at times one will prevail over the other, the seeking of balance forms an important principle in the role taking process.

**Dynamics of the Structure**

The Dynamics of the Structure essentially embody those elements which must be present in order for experiences of role taking to be effective, significant, and profound. It is first important to note that individual and varied approaches to role taking were identified by some of the actors in this study, indicating that in any context involving role taking it is important that the unique methods which may emerge be respected and valued.

Various sources of information such as research and observation clearly were seen as beneficial in gathering the knowledge, material, and experience necessary to meet the demands of a role and which are possibly lacking within the individual. Observing others, researching areas of life, human nature, and human activity, becoming sensitized to certain aspects of one's surroundings, and learning new skills, all enriched actors' characterizations and facilitated growth and learning for the actors themselves. It would seem that role taking in any context, and even other therapeutic approaches not specifically focused upon role taking, could benefit substantially from research and observation activities. As many of those individuals needing emotional and psychological assistance have sadly lacked what has been needed in their lives for healthy functioning it is important to find ways of introducing that which has been missing, and to offer new information and experience which might expand a limited range of awareness. Research and observation of various aspects of life, therefore, have potential benefits for actors, for role taking used outside strictly theatrical contexts, and, in and of itself, have merits and possible uses beyond role
taking alone. Actors also noted the benefits of multiple role taking experiences, which suggests that more than one attempt at "trying on" roles might offer the benefit of accumulated knowledge and generally expand one's ability to experiment with and consider new role possibilities; benefits which certainly hold potential therapeutic value.

Significant others, in particular playwrights, directors, fellow actors, and audiences, all emerged as central elements contributing to the nature of a role taking experience and all represent factors which must be considered in any role taking experience. The traditional role of the actor is to communicate the playwright's message. The quality and content of the writing, as well as the content of the play itself, influence the acting process and provide the material from which a role characterization is drawn. While using role taking in other contexts may not emphasize the importance of conveying the playwright's intent to an audience, it is apparent that who creates the character, how well it is crafted, and what it contains are most important. In any role taking experience the role of the playwright must be considered, whether it be a character crafted within a play by a professional playwright, or a role created by the individual who in fact intends to play it. In a therapeutic situation using a scripted role might provide new insights which a playwright offers, as well as potentially rich material with which to later create a role that is personally tailored and truly right for an individual. Using a role crafted by an individual and/or a therapist might better ensure that the role truly reflects the needs of the individual but would need to attain the depth and richness which can be found in a character contained within a written play.

The role of the director was given the most attention by actors in this study who emphasized both the enormous value and destructive impact this "significant other" can offer. The director is crucial in providing an environment and atmosphere which supports an effective role taking experience. In any form of role taking the director facilitates the dialectical relationship involving the merging of individual and role, and, in any instance in which role taking is involved, the one who steers the process is of paramount importance. In theatre, as in therapeutic settings, the role of director or therapist involves providing much needed guidance, support, insight, and leadership as it is often not possible to, in theatre, create a role or, in therapy, find the way to emotional well being without the wisdom and knowledge of a trusted "guide".
The role taking experience does not happen in isolation. Whether in theatre, therapy, or day to day life, interaction and interconnectedness with "fellow players" are central to life and to role taking experiences. In trying on a character for performance or for the insight it might hold for real life, the level of affirmation and support received from others greatly affects the ability to sustain and benefit from a role taking experience. Support and affirmation are also received from audience members, and actors attested to the power inherent in the attention and validation which can be encountered through this dynamic relationship. In generalizing role taking beyond a theatre setting it is a challenge to determine how the theme of performance and the roles of both fellow players and audience can be related to a wider life context. The relationship between actors and audience involves a certain performer/observer dynamic which contains a level of distance. The relationship between actor and fellow players suggests a greater level of interaction and intimacy. It may be appropriate to think of audiences as symbolically representing those in life who are "performed" for and those with whom one is less intimate, and that fellow players represent those with whom one engages in closer, ongoing relationships. It may be even more beneficial, however, to see the roles of fellow players and audiences as embodying qualities present to greater or lesser degrees in any relationship. In any role taking experience, then, and in therapeutic or real life contexts, it may be beneficial to consider differing levels of intimacy and performance, connectedness and distance, and observation and involvement which audiences and fellow players represent, and which will be present to varying degrees in any interaction with others.

The factor of risk figures prominently in role taking and translates into feelings of anxiety, fear, vulnerability as well as excitement, challenge, and a sense of discovery. Fear centers on the possibility of failure, of not having or finding what is needed from within, of not being able to form the relationship necessary between self and role. These fears are potentially present in any role taking context and can be found in other situations in life itself. Of key importance is the sense, based on the actors' testimonies, that fear and anxiety are inextricably involved in the exploration and experimentation which lead to discovery and insight. Risking, making mistakes, and withstanding fear and anxiety are to be accepted and even embraced in role taking, specifically, and normalized for the individuals involved. There are dialectical qualities involved in the balance and pull between fear and challenge, anxiety and discovery, and the desire for success and fear of failure which, if sustained, can possibly lead to the discovering of a
role as well as a growthful and meaningful experience for the role taker. In order to sustain emotional risk, some protection in the form of a supportive environment and a sound preparation process is necessary; it is in rehearsal or a group process that risk takes place so that "performance", whether it be on a stage or in real life, can follow with hopefully less uncertainty and a reassuring base of experience. "Donning the mask" of another character offers an experience that can have inherent value for any individual, as it is rare that day to day roles and behaviours can be dropped to be replaced by a new and different role or persona. There may be considerable risk, however, involved in playing a new role in real life. Playing characters other than oneself is considered acceptable on stage, and in a therapeutic setting or in rehearsals for a play a safe and supportive environment can be created. However, while it is possibly beneficial to try on a new role in real life the risks involved and potential responses from significant others need to be considered and anticipated.

A final factor identified by the actors was that of commitment. One way that the difficult, challenging, even anxiety-producing experience of role taking can be sustained is through a sense of commitment and purpose. For actors, creating performances of truth and honesty, forming a character faithful to the playwright's intent, and affecting their audiences can enable them to carry on through significant challenges. In other instances in which role taking might be used it may be necessary to consider how commitment might be identified for individuals and what it is that is worth working for that will enable them to sustain the role taking experience. While working toward capturing the truth and integrity of a role might be sufficient, it may be important to create commitment which is tied to one's personal goals and themes which emerge from exploring one's own life drama.

Whether in theatre or in other contexts, the factors identified as important by the actors in this study can be used as important guiding principles and considerations in using role taking as a vehicle for discovery and personal benefit.

The Outcomes of the Process

The Outcomes of the Process indicate some of the possible ways an individual can be impacted by the dialectical role taking relationship. Through a role psychological investigation offers increased knowledge and understanding concerning human nature and human existence. The experience of "getting inside" a character's mind might be particularly beneficial, within a therapeutic context, for those who
have had limited and/or negative life experiences. Being able to step outside of a possibly narrow range of understanding and exposed to alternate emotions, thoughts, and perspectives might lead to the awareness that other kinds of experiences exist. This also may engender greater compassion, tolerance, and empathy toward the circumstances and perspectives of others. The outcome of psychological investigation, as described by the actors, also suggests an element of distance that offers the opportunity for learning in a less emotionally intense manner. An individual can learn through exposure to other roles and be introduced to new "ways of being" without the accompanying loss of control or overwhelming emotional identification that an intense experiencing of a role can produce.

In this study personal discovery as an outcome involved the emergence of aspects of one's inner self through the experience of playing a character. Role taking, then, offers the opportunity to examine and learn from those personal elements, themes, and issues which are triggered by a particular character. In some cases certain areas or aspects of self knowledge may be confirmed, in others new or previously unacknowledged aspects may emerge. Individuals may discover new insights through testing themselves against or comparing themselves to a role. They also may become aware of their strengths and capabilities through role taking situations. As actors identified, discovery usually follows from a close identification with a role and, in seeking a truthful portrayal of that character, truths of a more personal nature can be revealed. In considering therapeutic applications, while focusing on how personal issues and concerns can specifically be dealt with through role taking is likely beneficial, it is interesting to note that it is possible for personal discovery to emerge simply from closely identifying with a character and seeking to portray that role with truth and integrity.

Personal discovery which carries on after a role is finished with is clearly feasible, as was evidenced by one actor who, upon finishing with a character, engaged in personal therapy to deal with the issues which had been triggered by the role. As well, the possibility that individuals are made up of may "selves" or at least have multiple facets to their personalities is supported by this study; through role taking it is possible for some these "selves" or other facets to emerge which, in considering therapeutic value, could provide individuals with opportunities to discover previously unexplored or unacknowledged aspects of themselves.
The outcome of personal expansion, in this study, refers to the addition of new experiences, knowledge, emotions, and thoughts which have not tended to be available or present in an individual's own life. Through playing roles different from oneself and coming in contact with novel qualities, individuals are invited to move beyond known and possibly limited experience. Expansion may evolve out of the earlier mentioned factors of research and observation which may offer new skills, observations, and insights into human behaviour. As actors indicated, this may be as concrete as experiencing what it is like to be physically handicapped or as elusive as researching the quality of courage. Through role taking it appears possible to discover that there is more than one way to find the "truth" and that there exist new "ways of being" which in turn can expand one's awareness and "role repertoire" in real life. As more roles are experienced, as actors attest, the ability to try on and effectively discover new characters increases. This suggests that multiple experiences create increased expertise and an accumulation of new experiences and perceptions which can be drawn upon, which can ever expand the range and flexibility of one's personality. In a therapeutic context, expansion of this nature would be particularly beneficial to those whose life experiences have been limited and restrictive. Finally, it is interesting to contemplate the inherent value of playing a role which embodies what one actor described as a "spirit of greatness". Whether a character possesses strength, courage, compassion or simply a rich and complex personality, it is possible that contact with such a role might provide insightful and even profound encounters which truly "expand" individuals beyond the limited boundaries of their known experience.

The outcome of personal expression reflects a central quality of acting and role taking, as a character is only "alive" through being expressed. Through this expression individuals are able to experience and express qualities and emotions for themselves. As actors indicated, it is possible to access feelings, come in contact with emotions one would like to express, and benefit from a well crafted character which offers a rich and satisfying vehicle for expressing thoughts and feelings which lie just beyond an individual's current capability to effectively articulate. It is possible that disturbing and undesired emotions may be accessed through a role as well. This is not necessarily negative as, in therapeutic settings for instance, it may be important to reveal and work with areas and sources of difficulty. However, as roles can elicit strong emotion which can be difficult to simply "turn off", this reality is important in selecting or creating roles for personal benefit and for creating a process which
effectively deals with intense affect if it arises. Of enormous benefit is the liberating playfulness, experimentation, and freedom to explore different styles, feelings, and behaviours which are available through role taking and often less possible in day to day living. As well, expressing emotions which are possibly not accepted or generally encouraged by society or those in one's immediate surroundings also becomes possible, and one also has the pleasure and even joy of returning to a childlike openness to experience and discovery which may have been dismissed or discouraged as a result of other life experiences and a limited range of current life roles.

A factor of safety can be linked to various beneficial outcomes of role taking as experimentation, exploration, and openness to new ideas and experiences are more likely in an environment of protection. Behaviours and actions within role taking hold little or no direct real life consequences and new roles can be "tried on" without any expectation of ongoing commitment. As well, it seems that the safety, even anonymity, afforded through donning the "mask" of a character facilitates the testing of ideas, following of impulses, moving freely beyond familiar boundaries, and being able to "play". It is possible, then, that safe exposure to new roles can lead to new ways of perceiving and defining oneself.

Actors attested to the fact that role taking experiences do, in fact, transfer to real life. It is possible, therefore, to consider therapeutic contexts in which it is hoped and intended that these experiences will continue to impact the individual involved after contact with a role has ceased. Actors noted that playing characters can lead to visible changes in one's personality and it is interesting to note one actor's opinion that playing different roles and adapting one's personality in response to different situations is a behaviour common to people generally and not restricted to actors alone. Role taking experiences, then, can actively extend and broaden one's range of experience and role repertoire from which to draw. Given that the impact of playing certain characters can lead to very significant real life consequences due to the intensity of emotion or power of the experience, it is important to monitor and address the issue of different "realities". As was discussed earlier, real life and the world of the theatre are separate realities, and the distinction between self and role must be sufficiently maintained so that an individual is not swept up in a different reality which is not firmly anchored from within. As actors attested, it is possible for consequences to occur in real life which are a direct result of "buying into" the temporary reality created
by a role. Within a therapeutic context it is important for the outcomes of role taking to be transferred to, and integrated into, the reality of an individual's own life context.

A significant way in which a role effectively transfers to real life is by it performing a preparatory function for future life experiences. As actors described, characters, through providing contact with certain emotions, situations, and relationships, offer opportunities for life rehearsal. In encountering real life events individuals may then find themselves better prepared and more familiar when similar or same events occur.

Peak experiences embody a powerful and somewhat more elusive outcome of the dialectical relationship. Actors described experiences of higher awareness and spiritual growth, and magical, creative moments which seem to suggest a power larger than oneself. It therefore appears possible for peak experiences to take place through role taking though it may be challenging to find intentional ways of facilitating such an outcome. One actor identified music as providing a sense of joy, openness to learning, and embracing of one's "inner child". Another focused upon the importance of relinquishing control and being willing to risk within a sound and effective preparatory process. Other actors described certain roles as providing transcendent and intensely powerful experiences based upon qualities the roles possess; playing characters of great courage, compassion, or insight can transport an individual beyond the range of his or her own experience to new "heights". Of particular interest is the concept, offered by one actor, that a well crafted role framed within a play must capture universal and identifiable themes found in human experience, such as pain and despair, truth and integrity, and must "weave things into a whole"; in the end, then, the role taking experience can be compared to a "tapestry" that is meaningful and recognizable. In this way an individual comes into contact with truths, realities, and meanings which exist at a higher, even spiritual, level of understanding. It is possibly important to consider how an experience such as this could be created in various contexts for the intended benefit of individuals involved. This would require a richly crafted role, possibly within the framework of a play, that offers sufficient breadth and depth to bring an individual to new "heights".

Professional validation emerged as a final outcome and reflects the central human need to know that something has been done well. In creating a role with integrity, offering something of worth, and fulfilling an important social function, actors were able to fill the need for a sense of accomplishment,
success, mastery, discovery, and affirmation, needs which are basic and central to human life. In using role taking in therapeutic contexts, it might be valuable to seek out or create roles which provide feelings of success, increase a sense of mastery, and address an individual's need for affirmation. In creating these elements within a role, perhaps ways in which they can be experienced in real life can also emerge.

Experiences of life drama, also an outcome described by the actors in this study, clearly confirmed the reality that the life historical context of the individual impacts the creation of a role and is in turn impacted by the experience of playing a role. It is impossible to ignore the unique perspectives an individual possesses and that which gives him or her a sense of purpose and meaning. This life context will strongly direct and frame the way in which a role will be portrayed and the way in which it will be meaningful to the individual. As was evidenced by some of the actors' experiences, roles can naturally cause important themes, previous life events, and areas of importance to come to an individual's awareness. Roles serve as a kind of projective vehicle in which individuals will respond to and identify with those aspects of the role which speak to their own personal experience and life context. As well, it is possible, as actors verified, for a role to directly parallel events and emotions experienced by an individual in his or her own life. In addition to causing elements from one's life historical context to emerge, a role may also facilitate a sense of completion and insight concerning past events and unresolved feelings, and further strengthen or solidify certain areas of meaning for an individual; this occurs through the opportunity to play important scenes, speak certain lines, and enact significant events which real life may not have often afforded.

The existence of experiences of life drama in this study emphasizes the central importance and inevitability of bringing inner aspects of oneself to a role and acknowledges the rich wealth of experience an individual has, and should be encouraged, to offer to role taking experiences. For the role to have meaning it must be anchored within, and related to, one's own self and unique life context. Finally, it is beneficial to acknowledge the relevance the concept or metaphor of life drama has in understanding the area of role taking and it's therapeutic possibilities.

Culmination or Movement of the Whole

The final section of results in this study to be considered for it's wider implications involves the relationship actors identify between role taking and the "larger world" and the existence of certain guiding
principles or values which were significant in the pursuit of acting as a vocation, as well as in determining
the meaning and fulfillment derived from a specific acting experience. While these significant elements
may not be important to everyone and cannot be assumed to have meaning for each individual, it is
important to consider their possible presence in deepening and forming the basis for meaningful and
impactful role taking experiences. For some actors and therefore, by extension, for some individuals in
general, being a "messenger" in the world is a "calling" and a central source of meaning. In bringing
important ideas to the world, society is enriched and in having a sense of being called to this function, one
feels a connection to a sense of purpose that is larger and more important than oneself.

As an "agent" an actor or individual, experiences fulfillment in performing a societal function
through educating and challenging others and assisting in the remedying of human difficulties. These
individuals seek to remind society of realities which many would prefer to ignore and call others to move
beyond narrow attitudes and beliefs. Through demanding that society honesty look at itself such a role
potentially acts as a catalyst for change.

Actors as "reflectors of experience" encompass not only actors but all those who find meaning in
personal and affirming relationships with others; through reflecting the lives of others and supporting the
truth of their experiences it is hoped that people will feel touched and validated. The basic human need to
have the truth and validity of one's experiences affirmed and made sense of is addressed by this reflector
role which represents, offers, and communicates ideas, feelings, and experiences common to the human
condition.

Actors as "spiritual guides" truly represent those who seek experiences of spiritual significance with
others. This involves aspiring to such "higher" values or principles of goodness, beauty, truth, integrity,
and spiritual meaning. Spiritual satisfaction is found in creating something of value which touches and
affects others and in creating moments of deep understanding, mutual discovery, and connectedness. That
which is spiritually significant also involves the "release of the spirit" in which pain, difficulty, and
struggle are sustained and transformed into experiences of meaning, recognition, and understanding.

These four "roles" offer possible areas of significance for individuals in wider contexts. They can be
considered for their potential in deepening the meaning of any role taking endeavor. The role of spiritual
guide has particular significance as the movement from pain and suffering into something of meaning and
understanding is surely an important part of a therapeutic process. As well, benefits may also lie in identifying "higher" values and principles which might give individuals a sense of purpose and meaning to strive towards.
A Possible Model for Future Practice

In contemplating the possible practical applications of the results of this study, as was reviewed in the previous section, there are ways in which the information yielded by the actors interviewed can be applied to contexts outside of theatre alone. In the literature review section of this study three drama-based therapies were explicated and the findings were directly linked to these therapies at the end of each section of the analysis. It seems beneficial to further extend the implications of the results and contemplate how this information might be best used to alter or build upon these existing therapies.

Fixed-Role Therapy in particular could benefit from this exercise as it most closely resembles performance theatre in its emphasis on character creation, rehearsal, and enactment. As well, while Fixed-Role Therapy (FRT) is based upon some concepts from theatre, it really has not benefitted fully from what the dramatic realm has to offer. It seems useful, then, to contemplate how the findings of this study might be used to further enrich and enhance FRT in particular. To that end, a possible model will be outlined here that attempts to expand FRT in this way.

FRT appears to most emphasize the process of creating a role which is enacted and tested in real life; however, the results of this study suggest that a more extensive preparatory process might be beneficial in greater ensuring the success of an enactment in real life and promoting the kinds of positive outcomes which the actors have described as possible through role taking. The "taking on" of a role is a complex process which may require more than rehearsals with a therapist before being enacted with significant others in one's own life. A graduated set of experiences seems appropriate in leading up to a real life experiment. A three stage model will be generally outlined here, with the first two stages serving as a preparatory process. Stage one emphasizes self awareness and self exploration through unstructured exercises and improvisations, much like those described in Drama Therapy. Stage two focuses upon experimenting with existing scripted roles. The third stage builds on the first two, and involves the development of a role sketch and enactment in real life. As stage one and two together serve as the preparatory process they share some commonalties and will therefore initially be discussed generally together, and then all three stages will each be discussed separately.
The Preparatory Process

There are factors and goals shared in stage one and two which have been incorporated based on the results of this study. One main intention is to create a setting and establish a preparatory process which respects the "safety factor" actors identified as important. Rather than role playing with a therapist in an office, for example, it may be more effective to create a physical setting similar to that of a theatre stage or rehearsal space, separate from day to day reality, which encourages experimentation and creativity in a group context. As the ability to risk was found to be an important factor in leading to discovery and learning in this study, it is important to foster and promote this concept through providing a safe environment which supports risk taking before an individual is expected to take such chances in real life. While anxiety can be healthy and risk taking important, both of these can be made manageable and sustainable through providing a gradual progression of experiences. As well, in a symbolic, representational world, with the full protection of "make believe", it is more possible to entertain new and different "ways of being" before progressing on to real life enactment.

The opportunity for personal expression is also enhanced in a protective setting. As self expression emerged as a positive outcome of the acting process in this study it is important to consider theatre exercises and written characters as possible vehicles for individual expression; as actors attested, sometimes scripted roles can access and facilitate the expression of feelings and thoughts which may lie beyond an individual's current capacity to articulate. As well, it is liberating to express what may not be acceptable in day to day life and there is a better chance of not falling into old and problematic emotional "patterns" and habits if there has been a chance to safely experience and practice the expression of feelings and other new "ways of being". An environment of safety which fosters spontaneity, openness, creative expression, the freedom to express oneself, playfulness, and a letting go of one's usual control, also provides the context in which "peak" or transcendent experiences are possible. This setting combined with a sound preparatory process were central factors identified by actors as necessary for such moments of awareness and understanding at a "higher" level. The safety factor also includes the involvement of others. It is the director/therapist who urges individuals to take risks while ensuring an atmosphere of emotional safety. As well, having the opportunity to experiment with roles with others before trying them out in real life is important, especially if there are concerns as to the receptiveness and support which
individuals might encounter from significant others in their own lives. In a supportive group setting an individual can safely explore personal issues and experiment with new roles before attempting real life enactment. This group can give beneficial feedback and the individual, in experiencing affirmation and support, may be strengthened and better able to sustain any less favourable responses he or she may experience in real life. It is important, therefore, to have a thorough "rehearsal" process to prepare for the exposure and pressure of "performance". The better the preparation, the greater the chance of later success and, in this case, a process of practice and rehearsal may ease the transition from symbolic reality to role enactment in real life.

Specific concepts which emerged in this study as central to role taking also need to be incorporated into a preparatory process. The concept of the dialectic, for instance, proved to be valuable in understanding the relationship between self and role. Within the context of the dialectic, it becomes important to fully develop both "poles" in depth. Characters must be explored and entered into fully and, as well, what the individual uniquely brings to that role must be accessed and integrated. Roles must offer emotions and experiences which are relatable and somehow feel "right" to the individual. As well, in playing roles that portray common and identifiable experiences an individual can experience a sense of connectedness and validation. Essential to this dialectical experience, however, is the merging of self and role. For the role to truly "penetrate", an individual must be able to identify with it and this merging is important as it involves an experience which is deeper than that of simply "trying on" and can lead to significant personal outcomes.

Another concept beneficial to incorporate into the preparatory process is that of life drama. In exploring the "self" as one pole of the dialectic it is impossible to ignore an individual's unique perspective and that which gives him or her purpose and meaning. A respect for what the individual brings to a role must be maintained and it is her life historical context which will determine the way in which a role is meaningful.

The concept of distance is central to role taking and one which warrants attention, exploration, and practice in the preparatory process in order to maintain the balance between self and role and best ensure healthy and beneficial outcomes. Through stage one and stage two an individual can develop an experiential understanding of the important balance between entering the world of a role and maintaining
a solid sense of self, and can establish an effective level of both intimacy and separateness which facilitates the full experiencing of a role while retaining one's essential identity. It is to be expected that experimenting and fostering identification with various roles will likely facilitate the emergence of personal issues, feelings, and associations. This can be supported and dealt with while also fostering the ability to "pull back" from a role and understand the nature of the relationship between self and role. Through learning the concept of distance, it is possible for emotional release and new understanding to be combined with the ability to monitor and retain a conscious awareness of the process. It is also important to foster the ability to distinguish among different kinds of reality. As actors attested, the temporary reality created by a role can lead to real life consequences. Again, while experiencing the inner "world" of a character is desirable, it is important to maintain the separation between symbolic reality and real life. As well, roles are only "inhabited" temporarily and the process of letting go, followed by an integration and understanding of what has been learned and gained, must be practiced and established, thereby further preparing an individual for an attempt at role enactment in real life.

A final concept which warrants attention in the preparation process is that of commitment. In determining that which is personally worth committing to for an individual, roles can be developed which foster and strengthen meaning and purpose. Once aware of these areas of possible commitment greater clarity can be given to the intent of the real life enactment and it may be more possible to sustain a role despite the influence of established relationships, familiar "patterns", old habits, and possible challenging responses from significant others. In a preparatory process it may be possible to "buy in" to the existence of new possibilities and come to understand how enacting a role might facilitate positive changes. It seems beneficial to introduce and experience these concepts through actual practice with the hopes that they will later strengthen and benefit the real life enactment.

**Stage One**

Stage one aims to foster self awareness through unstructured techniques. As Drama Therapy asserts, the use of improvisational exercises, in fostering spontaneity and free expression, facilitates the emergence of inner material. In the dialectical relationship between self and role it is crucial that individuals are able to bring important aspects of themselves to the enactment of a character. As well, in creating a role for therapeutic purposes some initial work concerning self awareness is important in
determining what exactly a role sketch should contain. While time spent between a client and therapist may yield important material to this end, dramatic means can be used to assist with identifying areas of problem and possibility. Considering the strong drama based nature of FRT it makes sense to base a preparation process upon dramaturgical principles as well. The use of loosely structured techniques could hopefully act as projective techniques through which important themes, issues, feelings, and experiences surface. Drama Therapy’s use of all aspects of theatre such as story dramatization, improvisation, movement, mime, masks, and role playing could all be utilized to this end, requiring that the director/therapist be well versed in theatre approaches. Stage one hopefully facilitates a level of personal awareness which provides a baseline of understanding from which to start. It seems logical to become aware of one’s own life and the issues to be addressed before creating a role to "take on". As well, it is important to promote the discovery and preservation of that which is valued in "the self" in addition to experimenting with new or desired qualities. An exploration period such as this may better ensure that subsequent role experiments can be integrated into an already established self awareness and knowledge.

Stage 2

Stage 2 aims to provide experiences of role taking using existing scripted characters. This hopefully prepares individuals for the real life enactment of a role as well and provides information regarding what the character sketch should contain. As was discussed earlier, central concepts in role taking can be introduced and rehearsed during this preparation process; through scripted roles, specifically, individuals can experiment with levels of distance, learning what it is to enter the world of a role without being "possessed" or overwhelmed in the process; they can safely risk bringing aspects of themselves to a role before taking even greater risks in real life. The ability to let go of roles and integrate the results of those experiences can be fostered and individuals can come to realize what they feel they can realistically "take on" in a real life role enactment.

Similar to stage one, greater self awareness is possible though, rather than using unstructured exercises, individuals gain personal discovery through identifying with and learning from actual roles which enable aspects of the self to emerge and be expressed. In seeking to portray a role truthfully, truths may emerge concerning oneself, including increased awareness of the "many selves" or multiple facets of
one's personality which have possibly not had the opportunity to find expression and acceptance. These discoveries can be strengthened in the preparatory process and used in the formation of role sketches for real life enactment.

As was mentioned, it is important for roles to contain emotions and experiences which are relatable and provide affirming and validating experiences for the individual. It is also important for characters to contain elements of difference and contrast so as to offer experiences of "expansion" and personal growth. Actors affirmed in this study that the "taking on" of characters can result in personally expansive and enriching experiences. Increased understanding and learning can follow from playing roles which involve new "territory" and push individuals beyond familiar confines. It is therefore important not to link individuals with roles which will reinforce limited and restrictive views of themselves. In addition to exposure to new and different qualities, it may be necessary for individuals to acquire new skills, knowledge and experience in order to effectively portray a character. Observation, research, and the acquisition of specific skills can be introduced in this preparatory phase which not only provide personal benefits in and of themselves but increase the ease with which individuals will be able to later acquire what is needed for a real life enactment. As individuals may lack that which is necessary to portray a role, the abilities and skills involved in gathering new information need to be fostered. It is a reality that individuals may be drawing upon limited or even negative experience and before they can entertain new possibilities for themselves and test these out in real life, it may be necessary to introduce the idea that there are possibilities other than those they have always known. Practicing in a safe environment with challenging roles and gathering the information necessary to play them may experientially promote this idea.

Actors also described the benefit of multiple or accumulated role experiences which serve to expand an overall role repertoire. The opportunity to "test out" roles before creating a role enactment may serve to broaden the ability to play various roles and increase an individual's repertoire from which to draw. Playing roles which are both attainable and inspiring was also found by actors to be beneficial. Playing roles which are positive, attractive, and even possess elements of "greatness" might inspire an individual's imagination, bring them in contact with qualities to which they can aspire, facilitate a higher level of understanding, and broaden the scope of their own personal goals. As actors identified it is often through
a beautifully crafted script and well written character that deeply meaningful experiences arise. In utilizing scripted roles in a preparatory process, an element of vitality and inspiration may be provided to an individual's initial role taking experiences which they can carry further to the creation of a role enactment for real life.

**Stage 3**

Stage three can be aligned most closely with FRT in its focus upon the creation of a role sketch for purposes of real life enactment. In this stage the transition from the symbolic, representational world to that of the real world is made. This stage is crucial as it is essential that an individual is assisted in transferring a dramatic experience, being utilized for therapeutic purposes, beyond the protected rehearsal space to real life experience. An individual still has some protection of make believe in that they are playing a role other than themselves, however, there is a higher risk in playing a role within the context of one's own life. The intent of the preparation process is to increase knowledge and skills, ensure a greater chance of success, and reduce the level of emotional risk. Support must continue throughout the creation of a role sketch and the enactment process, and it is up to the therapist/director to help the individual create and participate in experiences which are challenging yet manageable.

During preparation the roles played by the group members are those of fellow players and audience members. Within this protective context an individual interacts with others and receives support and feedback. In moving into stage three, the roles played by group members are transferred to the "significant others" in an individual's own life. This transition most certainly needs to be anticipated and supported. Interaction with and feedback from fellow group members offer important information which an individual can utilize in creating a role sketch. In fact, the information gained from various sources during preparation can be used to prepare an individual and as material which directs how a role sketch is crafted: the way in which an individual interacts with others in theatre exercises may indicate areas which could be addressed through real life role enactment; through role taking and theatre techniques aspects of oneself emerge which provide important clues as that which is meaningful and problematic for an individual and which should be incorporated as well; the experiencing of a number of roles through preparation hopefully provides role information which can be included and the richness of scripted roles might offer new areas of depth and inspiration upon which to draw; awareness of the nature of one's "life
drama" provides information and a context within which a role sketch can be placed; the research, observation and skills which may have been acquired in order to play certain roles for practice not only provides material but hopefully prepares an individual to gather further information if necessary when creating and carrying out a real life role enactment. From these various sources of information it is hopefully possible to determine the qualities that should be present which are both similar, validating, and indentifiable to an individual, as well as those which are different and challenging. Qualities which are attractive to an individual and foster a sense of personal power and mastery, and even incorporate a sense of "greatness", can also emerge out of preparation and be incorporated into enactment. Of great importance is a role sketch respecting the knowledge, experience, and perspective the individual possesses. While areas of difficulty need to be addressed, that which is truly important and meaningful must also be included. As actors attest, it is possible to discover, explore, and affirm, through roles, central areas of purpose; such areas can help form the shape and direction of a role sketch and the enactment becomes an affirmation of meaning as well as a testing of new possibilities.

Also transferred to this third stage are those central concepts which have been fostered during preparation. The framework of the dialectic, distancing, and commitment, for example, must be carried through and can be relied upon to assist in guiding the enactment process. Through the concept of distance, the balance between role and self is monitored; through a well established sense of commitment and purpose an individual may be able to complete the enactment experience and pursue new possibilities despite the power of old relationship patterns and habitual responses.

In keeping with FRT, the enactment experience is assessed at the end by the individual who determines for himself or herself what has been learned and can be integrated into future experience. The final element of protection, that of temporarily "trying on" a role different from oneself, is relinquished and the individual must be assisted in letting go of the role they have enacted. Hopefully through preparation the "letting go" process is not unfamiliar and in establishing the importance of distance an individual has retained a sense of self which has been firmly present throughout. The areas of information gathered during preparation which directed the creation of the role sketch also provides a context which can be referred back to at the end; the enactment experience must be added to and integrated with the self awareness and experiences gained during the preparation period.
While this three stage model is, as outlined here, general in nature the intent has been to indicate more specifically the ways in which the results from this study can be applied to existing therapies and utilized in actual practice. Other kinds of applications most certainly exist and it is beneficial, as has been attempted here, to consider the ways psychology and existing therapies can benefit in more significant and meaningful ways from the realm of theatre and performance.
Implications for Future Research

In considering areas for future research which might continue on with the work of this study, a number of possibilities, again mainly of a qualitative nature, deserve mention.

The three stage model which was outlined in very general terms in the previous section could be refined further, attempted with a pilot group, and assessed as to the outcomes and its effectiveness. The outcomes could be compared to the outcomes of actors' experiences covered in this study.

A more complex and involved concept for future research might involve, again, the development and piloting of the three stage model outlined earlier, but in this instance it could be compared with participants of Psychodrama, Drama Therapy and/or Fixed Role Therapy groups. The experiences of those in the different groups and the outcomes of each could be compared across therapy groups.

In looking at specific areas explored in this study, it might be interesting to focus more deeply on elements and factors which emerged as important. The concepts of distance and the dialectic, for instance, which were revealed as central to the role taking process possibly deserve greater attention and exploration.

This study focused upon the experiences of actors in an effort to reveal what the realm of theatre has to offer to the world of psychological theory and therapy. There is still much, however, in theatre which warrants examination and which could yield rich and important insights and information concerning role taking and the greater understanding of human experience. The impact of the director and audience, for instance, on role taking experiences could be explored in greater detail and linked, in particular, with role theory.

In seeking more understanding of the acting experience itself, it might be revealing to interview actors throughout an actual role taking experience and to include a follow up interview some time later once they have had some distance from the experience and time to reflect upon it. This approach might yield new information due to the immediacy inherent in interviewing actors during a role taking experience.

To further strengthen the results of this study it might be possible to develop a questionnaire which would contain questions designed to verify and confirm the nature of the "data" gathered in this qualitative exploration of actors' experiences. The questions could cover such things as the factors
involved in facilitating an effective and positive acting experience as well as the outcomes which have been outlined in this study. Using a different kind of methodology might gather information which could further revise, refine, and extend this area of study and the phenomena in question. A questionnaire could also increase the number of subjects involved.

Other areas for future research most certainly exist, especially given that little research has been done which explores the ways psychology can benefit from in depth research of theatre.
Summary

This study has sought to address the question: "What is the experience of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played?" The question emerged out of a desire to explore what the role and experience of the actor in character might have to offer to the realm of psychology and to the increased understanding of human experience. The hope was that an increased understanding of the actors' experience might yield insights into the power of role taking and how it might affect personal change. As well, it was hoped that the results of this study might strengthen and add to the theoretical and practical foundations of existing drama-based therapies, and increase understanding as to what elements are involved in facilitating change through dramatic means.

Three bodies of knowledge related to the phenomena in question were initially reviewed to provide a background to the research question and a context in which the results of the study could be placed. Four theories of acting were reviewed including ways in which these theories view and define successful and effective character development and enactment. The approaches of Stanislavski, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook, and Spolin and Johnstone were chosen due to their significant impact on the theatre world and because they represent four strongly contrasting theoretical orientations. The second body of knowledge focused upon existing published accounts of actors' experiences. As the most important source of information concerning the experience of actors is actors themselves, it was relevant to review published testimonies written by actors with relevant statements, for the purposes of organization and use in this study, extracted and grouped into predominant themes. These themes helped indicate possible assumptions which could be made regarding the outcomes of this study. The third body of knowledge reviewed focused upon three drama-based therapies which use principles and techniques from theatre in order to reach therapeutic ends. Given that it was hoped that the results of this study might have much to offer to the therapeutic realm, the review of this body of knowledge was particularly important.

The methodology of this study was qualitative in nature with the hope that the original quality of the actors' descriptions would be preserved as much as possible. Ten professional actors were reviewed by the researcher and asked to describe the experience of taking on a role and how that experience affected him or her. The resulting interviews were transcribed, significant statements extracted, and these statements clustered into themes. The five themes, and their sub themes, came to form the essential
structure of the narrative analysis. In ensuring that the methodology and structure of the analysis were instructed by the content of the material itself it was hoped that the actors' experiences would be preserved and communicated in as true and authentic a manner as possible.

In introducing the five themes or sections involved in the analysis chapter, the concept of the dialectic was used in providing a framework with which to make sense of the experiences of actors. The nature of the dialectic was described as an interplay between contrasting poles out of which can emerge modification or adjustment and something which is learned, gained, created, or synthesized. As well, in order to make a direct link between the material provided by the actors and the therapeutic realm, at the end of each section of the analysis the findings and insights were related to the three therapies reviewed earlier.

The first analysis section involved the context of the dialectic in which the two "poles", character and actor were established. The first pole involved addressing the basic ingredients of the dramatic context, such as the play, relationships with fellow actors, the audience, and director, the "externals" such as lighting and costumes, and rehearsal and performance. The second pole involved exploring the life historical context of the individual actor. Both poles were essential in establishing the context of the dialectic.

The second section focused upon the structure of the dialectic and essentially supported the existence of the two poles of actor and character. In forming the character actors made statements indicating the nature and importance of their own presence as actors in the acting process and finding what was necessary for a role from within. Statements also emphasized the necessity of allowing the life and world of the character to have central importance. Of greatest focus and attention was the merging process between actor and character; the coming together of both to create a fully formed, fully alive character. In performing the character actors identified the challenge of maintaining the relationship between actor and character and how this "co-existence" necessitated addressing the issue of intimacy and separateness. Experiences of separation emphasized the important role of distance in role taking both between actor and character, and between real life and stage life. Experiences of non-distinction focused on the ways in which distance was difficult to maintain and gave way to strongly personal and intimate relationships between actor and role. Performing the character was followed by the need to leave the character, and
actors described ways in which the character "lived on" for them and emphasized the necessity of being able to "let go" of this relationship.

The third section of the analysis focused up on the dynamics of the dialectical structure, that is, the factors which must be in place for the dialectical relationship between character and actor to be effective and meaningful. Four main areas were discussed which highlighted the elements often present which help the dialectic is accomplished. The first factor, sources of knowledge, referred to the importance of gathering additional information, understanding, and skills in order to add to the actor's own existing knowledge. This specifically took the form of research, observation, and accumulated experience. The second factor referred to the important roles played by significant others in the acting process, namely the playwright, director, fellow actors, and audience. The third factor involved the complex presence of risk in the acting process and how anxiety, fear, and vulnerability can be both uncomfortable for the actor but essential to discovery and inspiration. The last factor was that of commitment and involved the reasons actors find to persevere through often daunting and challenging acting experiences.

The fourth section of the analysis chapter covered the outcome of the process, that is, the ways in which the actors were personally affected by their experiences. This was divided into two main areas, the first concerning itself with experiences of personal progression or the general ways in which actors were affected. These ways included psychological investigation which referred to the opportunity to examine the emotions and thoughts of others and gain psychological insights through the playing of characters. A second way in which actors were affected involved the area of self discovery in which previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of themselves emerged. In contrast, a third area of personal progression involved expansion in which actors' lives were further enriched by new experiences and moving outside known boundaries; rather than revealing what was known these experiences added new elements to actors' lives. Another way in which actors were affected involved the opportunity for expression which existed through the playing of characters; in addition to emotional catharsis actors were able to express aspects of their own inner selves. The safety factor emerged as crucial to facilitating discovery, expansion and expression as it was within that safety of playing someone other than oneself that new possibilities could be realized. A sixth way in which actors were affected by the roles they played involved the actual transfer of acting experiences to real life; the knowledge and experience gained
from characters carried over and aided actors in their own lives in various ways. Another experience of personal progression was described as "peak" or transcendent in nature; this type of experience seemed to lift actors into a higher level of awareness and offered deeply meaningful and powerful opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. A final way in which actors were affected involved the reward of professional validation; in feeling that they had done something well actors were able to experience a sense of satisfaction, success, affirmation, and mastery.

The second area involved in the outcome of the process section was that of life drama. This emerged as an important area separate from the first as it was impossible to convey the depth and extent to which actors were affected by characters without placing those experiences within the life contexts of the actors. Four actors were discussed who truly represented individuals whose life dramas both impacted and were affected by roles they played.

The final section of the narrative analysis, entitled culmination or movement of the whole, focused on culminating experiences which involved a focus larger and more profound that simply the actors themselves. Actors described connections to a sense of purpose and meaning higher than themselves and the importance of the relationship between actors and the outer world. This relationship took four different forms. The actor as messenger involved the communication of important ideas, stories, and experiences. The actor as agent involved the performing of a societal function in which audiences were educated and challenged, and called to reflect and act upon the problems in society. Actors as reflectors of experience embodied a personal and affirming relationship between actors and others in which actors were able to reflect and affirm the experiences of others and thereby touch them in a deeply personal way. Lastly, actor as spiritual guide involved the creation of something of deep meaning and value in which the connection between actors and others took on spiritual significance.

The fifth chapter of this study, the discussion, essentially aimed to review the results of the study, address limitations, consider implications for future research, and most importantly, explore the wider theoretical and practical implications of the findings of this study. The general implications for theory and practice considered, first, specific implications for theatre theory and, second, implications for psychological theory and practice. In the latter, results were broadened to included implications for role taking in wider contexts, general human experience, and possible therapeutic applications. To extend
therapeutic possibilities a model for future practice was outlined which intended to deepen and strengthen Fixed-Role Therapy, one of the three therapies initially outlined in the literature review.

In conclusion, it is evident that the experiences of actors are rich sources of information concerning the areas of role taking and human experience itself. In identifying factors which must be present for effective character development, other role taking experiences, therapeutic or otherwise, can be strengthened by this information. The outcomes of the dialectical relationship indicate that much is possible through role taking experiences in the areas of personal discovery, expansion, expression, and spiritual development. Finally, the realm of psychology and existing drama-based therapies clearly benefit from the powerful and truly "alive" experiences of actors who can attest to the far reaching and profound nature of benefits which result from role taking experiences.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX 1
Letter of Information

Department of Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia,
5780 Toronto Road,
Vancouver, B. C.
V6T 1L2

Date:

To:

I am conducting a study which is an investigation of how professional actors have been personally affected by a character or role they have played. This project is being completed as a master's research study under the supervision of Dr. Larry Cochran in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The purpose of the study is to obtain first-hand, detailed descriptions of the experience of taking on a character from beginning to end, and how that experience has impacted the actors.

I am interested in finding actors who have had such experiences and who are willing to talk about it in considerable depth.

Actors will be asked to choose one character which they feel affected them personally and to describe the experience of taking on that character from beginning to end, starting from when the actor first had contact with the character. There are no expectations on my part concerning how actors have been impacted by the characters they have played. I am interested in obtaining the personal and unique experiences of individual actors. Participation in this study will involve one to two interviews with approximately 3 to 5 hours of total time. Involvement in this study will provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experience, examine it in greater detail, and share it with an interested, supportive, and noncritical researcher. We hope that being involved in the study will be both an interesting and useful experience.

All identifying information will be deleted in order to ensure confidentiality and to protect participants' privacy. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without jeopardy of any kind.

Sincerely,

Jane Osborne
Master's Student
Dept. of Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia

Dr. Larry Cochran
Professor
Dept. of Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia
APPENDIX 2

Consent Form

Research Project:
Dramatic Actors and the Nature of Role Taking Experiences

This project is being completed as a master's research study by Jane Osborne under the supervision of Dr. L. Cochran in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The study concerns the experiences of actors who have been personally affected by characters they have played. Participation will involve interviews and approximately 3 to 5 hours of total time. All sessions will be audiotaped and then erased at the end of the project. Interview material will be transcribed and all identifying information will be deleted to ensure confidentiality and to protect participants' privacy. Participants are free to ask any questions concerning the project and may withdraw at any time, without jeopardy of any kind.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and agree to participate in the study.

__________________________________________
Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant
APPENDIX 3

Follow-Up Interview Questions

To be asked only if necessary and only once the co-researcher has finished answering the central question that this study is addressing:

1. What role, if any, did the director, fellow actors, audience, playwright, and/or rehearsal period play in your experience?

2. Did you find that you related strongly to this character or did the character seem quite different from yourself? Was the character easy or challenging to play?

3. Did you feel fairly separate or "in control" when taking on this character or did you experience a sense that the character had a "life of its own" and took over somewhat?

4. Did you experience anxiety, vulnerability, fear, or a sense of emotional risking in playing this role?

5. In playing this role did you find yourself carrying out actions or expressing emotions which you wouldn't normally in your own life or which would be considered unacceptable by others?

6. Were improvisational exercises involved in the development of this character and if so, what importance did they have?

7. Could you elaborate on the conditions which were most important in this experience and which needed to be present in developing this character?

8. Could you further elaborate on the ways you were personally affected by this particular role-taking experience?