An aesthetic of relationality:
Exploring the intersection of embodiment, imagination and foolishness in research-informed theatre

by

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Abstract

Despite that qualitative health researchers cite the embodied nature of performance as a way to move beyond the constraints of the written word and draw multiple perspectives into their research practices, much research-informed theatre is informed by an “aesthetic of objectivity” (Denzin, 2003, p. 73). Researchers taking up this perspective assume a linear trajectory between research findings and performed representation, overlooking the multiple embodied perspectives that are implicated in the development of research-informed theatre. To challenge this assumption I explore how artist-researchers draw on their own embodiment and imagination as ways to understand the research findings, how they conceptualize the intended audience, and how those understandings shape the creative process of the research-informed play. Using the case study of Cracked: new light on dementia (I am the playwright and director) I focus my analysis on three concepts: embodiment (the interrelationship between body and social/cultural/historical spaces), imagination (extending beyond one’s own experience to relate to and envision that of another person) and foolishness (engaging bravely and vulnerably with a willingness to fail). Throughout their work artist-researchers playfully extend from their own embodiment towards the experiences of other people using a multiplicity of actions, such as word choice/language, movement, spacing and timing. Central to this playful extending is a
disruption of their own embodiment and surrounding social/cultural/historical spaces that itself requires a willingness to fail. Audience members are assumed to participate in the performance and the play is created to support their playful extending with the potential that they might also become foolishly disrupted.

Artist-researchers draw on the artistic form of theatre to aesthetically explore ideas, concepts and experiences, inviting other people to explore with them. The aesthetic space created by the ways artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt is called an aesthetic of relationality. An aesthetic of relationality provides multiple people with a unique space to aesthetically explore the interrelationship between their own bodily horizons and surrounding social/cultural/historical spaces as well as a planning and evaluative frame for research-informed theatre.
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Preface

“To study [as an artist], you enter into a situation with your whole being, you listen and then begin to move around inside it with your imagination. You can study every situation you are in. You can learn to read life while life is happening.”

Anne Bogart, 2001, A Director Prepares

“A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.”

Peter Brook, 1968, The Empty Space

I first started working in arts-based health research over 10 years ago on a research-informed play called After the Crash: a play about brain injury, of which I was the playwright/director (Gray et al., 2011). After the Crash was created as a knowledge translation strategy in order to expose health care providers, managers and decision makers to the experiences of brain injury survivors, principles of person-centred care and the ways our health care system falls short of providing that care (Colantonio et al., 2008; Kontos et al., 2012). During the play’s creative development process, the research team held a meeting to discuss said process including moving the research findings about the experiences of brain injury survivors into dramatic form. As part of the meeting we discussed several movement sequences that were more abstract in nature, that represented themes and dynamic emotions through movement, rather than scenes that were narrative and text-based. These movement sequences, as stand-alone scenes as well as transitions between scenes, aimed to nonverbally express qualitative themes that emerged from focus groups with brain injury survivors, particularly complex emotions found in the tone of words, as well as the words themselves (Rossiter, K. et al., 2008, p. 283).

With genuine curiosity, questions were raised about the open-ended, interpretive nature of these nonverbal sequences, in contrast with more text-based narrative scenes which appeared at first glance to be more directly linked to original research findings as well as our objectives for how audience members might take them up. If the purpose of the play was for people to understand the material, and access the material (i.e., make the material more accessible, not less accessible) then does including sections which are not based in words but based in abstract movement, hinder the audience’s understanding and learning of the material? Were these
aesthetic aspects of the play an *added layer*, imposed by the artists for artistic reasons, not data translation reasons? Main concerns stemmed from whether this form of representation would obscure initial research findings in a production whose primary purpose was knowledge translation and making findings more accessible.

In my wide-eyed way, I did my best as a non-scholar artist to discuss how the movement sections were not *added*, but rather were *part of* the play. Everything that was a part of the play emerged from the research findings as our original source material. Yes, the material was shaped by me and by the other artists, but nothing was *added* on top. And the shaping was, well, that’s what art is… It’s an expression of ideas or concepts shaped through a particular form by a person or several people so it can be witnessed by audience members. (Isn’t it? I felt myself struggling to describe). But as the conversation continued, I could feel my face start to flush, mostly because I did not have a clue about how to better address these questions. While I understood the words coming out of my colleagues’ mouths, I had no idea what they were saying. I could not fathom how the artistic work the other artists and I had done was a personal imposition on the research findings.

After some time had passed from this moment and other similar experiences, I began to consider that perhaps I had, in fact, ‘done something’ personal to the research findings and that this was the point of the artistic process (Gray, 2014). A significant part of my initial theatre training focused not only on the techniques required of a theatre artist, such as how to block a scene, how to strategically move actors on stage to visually support the scene, but my training also focused on where *I* was situated in the work. I was continually being asked by my teachers “What do you have to say to the world, Julia? Where are you in this work?” My fellow students and I were being asked to not just place ourselves inside the artistic work, but to grow our work out of our own experiences. We needed to allow our personal experiences to inform every aspect of what we were doing: a rendering for a design class, picking a scene for a directing class, writing a new play, experimenting with different art forms through performance. If you didn’t deeply and personally connect to it, why were you doing it? If there wasn’t *something* about the work you were doing, some question that tugged at you, some point you wanted to challenge, why do it at all? If we wanted our work to resonate emotionally and personally with our audiences, we needed to delve emotionally and personally into the work to uncover those raw, vulnerable moments which would be expressed through the art form. As theatre students, we came to understand that not only were our individual life experiences going to shape the work
we were doing but the particular aesthetic we were developing as artists was intrinsically connected to who we were as individuals. We may have each been assigned the same scene to direct, but the final performances, the ‘outcomes,’ would each be entirely different because we were each entirely differently. Ultimately, it would be impossible to disentangle a person from their artistic process (Manning, 2015).

This moment of being questioned, what Sara Ahmed (2006a, 2006b) might term a “wonky moment” (as a moment of disruption or when things come out of line) as well as the percolation of ideas that followed, propelled me to pursue this PhD. These ‘wonky moments,’ of wrinkled noses, flushed faces and feelings of failure and ridiculousness, of “undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing” are usually flashing, fluorescent signposts to rich and murky places to explore off the main drag, pointing to “more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 2-3). This moment and others left me curious about epistemological expectations of what constitutes legitimate knowledge and the processes and methods that seek to produce that knowledge. My research colleagues were not wrong to ask questions and I was certainly not wrong to feel flustered in trying to respond. We were both working from particular traditions, bringing particular assumptions to the collaboration and in trying to speak to each other in that meeting. This dissertation, in many ways, is an attempt to embrace this ‘wonky moment’ and continue this conversation with creativity, cooperation and receptivity to surprise.
1. **Introduction**

We’ve come a long way in the past 10 years. Arts-based research is coming of age, particularly in the social sciences where arts practices have a more established relationship with research. In their recent Special Issue on Critical Approaches to Arts-Based Research (2015), arts-based researchers Anne Harris, Mary Ann Hunter and Clare Hall discuss how those “working at the nexus of arts, research and education… are continuing to move away from a defense of arts-based research and its ‘validity’ and toward a celebration of… diverse ways of knowing and doing research” (p. 1). While attempting to move beyond the binary between ‘science’ versus ‘arts’ they acknowledge the need “for more thoroughly theorised and critically-threaded approaches” (p. 1).

Qualitative health researchers similarly acknowledge that arts-based health research is undertheorized, and recognize that, in order to render these practices as theoretically and methodologically robust, further study is required (Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Stasiulis, 2012; Boydell et al., 2016; Fraser & al Sayah, 2011; Hodgins & Boydell, 2014; Rossiter et al., 2008). Qualitative arts-based health research “combines traditional qualitative strategies (such as participant observation, informal interviewing, and structured group discussions) with methods informed by the arts” (Boydell et al., 2016, p. 2). There is growing evidence about the efficacy of arts-based health research with audiences and stakeholders but there is an acknowledged deficit of understanding the ‘art part’ of arts-based health research (Boydell et al., 2012; Kontos et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011); specifically little is known about how the artistic process of creating the arts-based research project as well as aesthetic engagement with audiences holds the potential to contribute to that efficacy. There is an interest in this corner of the field to focus on the role of arts-based health research as a scholarly activity worthy of academic recognition within the sciences.

Artist-researchers - understood as those who undertake a scholarly exploration or investigation primarily through artistic form(s) - and theorists and philosophers from the fine arts are hesitant to fully embrace qualitative researchers’ calls for academic recognition within the sciences. They caution that too fine attention to the intuitive aspects of the creative process runs the risk of stripping it of any spontaneity, understood to be fundamental to artistic practices (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013; Jürs-Munby, 2006; Manning, 2015). Concerns are voiced that “downplaying or not appropriately attending to the conditions of art itself could have the effect
of forcing art to disappear in service of research” (O'Donoghue, 2014, p. 170). In the academy, the work of the artist is undervalued (Manning, 2015; Riley & Hunter, 2009; Thrift, 2007) and as part of attempts to substantiate this work there are concerns about forcing arts processes into (social) scientific methodological boxes (Manning, 2015). While it could be argued that the work artists do has always involved research at the level of art-making itself, legitimizing the practices of artist-researchers in academic terms raises questions about what constitutes knowledge and how practices themselves produce knowledge (Manning, 2015; see also Riley & Hunter, 2009). The work of philosopher, dancer and visual artist Erin Manning (2015) is particularly useful here. Unpacking artistic method on traditional social scientific terms, Manning attests, stifles potential creativity, “renders experience still-born” (p. 9), moves process away from its relational aliveness and organizes it within the bounds of pre-existing knowledge forms. If method, the ways we find answers to questions, is what “defines knowledge to its core” (p. 8) then rethinking method questions the very core of what constitutes knowledge in the first place. That is not to say we should not organize processes of exploring experience completely, but as artist-researchers we must not solely rely on traditional social scientific ways of working and doing.

I contend that for the field of arts-based research to grow, including research-informed theatre, critically theorizing these approaches is imperative without stifling creativity and limiting knowledge production to modes of doing that are restricted to what we already know on social scientific terms. The artist-researcher plays a pivotal role in any arts-based research project and yet our process is woefully underexplored. As both an artist-researcher and an emerging social scientist, my interest with this study is to employ the strengths of social science through an empirical study, to help articulate how as artist-researchers we draw on our embodiment and imagination to engage in the artistic process of creating research-informed theatre. This includes understanding the research findings and experiences of other people, and conceptualizing the intended audience, as an active event or a happening (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013; see also Manning, 2015). I concur that the spontaneity or the ‘aliveness’ of the work is essential to this happening: to paraphrase American graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat - “I don’t think of making art when I make art; I think of life.” It is the alive, active process of art-making that must happen, taking place spontaneously within the technique of art-making itself as exploratory. My intention is not to quash the aliveness by discussing it, or encourage artist-
researchers and arts-based qualitative researchers\textsuperscript{1} to ponder it in the moment of creation (thereby stifling it), but rather to provide a theoretical framework to discuss it before or after the fact.

I should emphasize that, while tensions are articulated in the scholarly literature about the best ways to approach the study and practice of arts-based research, my study has emerged out of my practice as an artist-researcher collaborating with social and health scientists. It was my experiences and observations in practice that brought me to wonder about the ways embodiment and imagination are implicated for the artist-researcher. In practice I was often being asked about my positionality and my relationship to the research findings, and how these aligned with the way the research-informed play was shaped through the form of theatre. Questions such as “but you don’t have a brain injury – how do you write those stories?” or “those metaphors aren’t explicitly in the data – how did you come to include them in the play?” or “what is the purpose of those dance sequences if they do not translate specific text from our focus group transcripts?” piqued my interest and propelled this study. These questions often emerged during rehearsal or after works-in-progress presentations or performances when team members observed how a particular performed moment resonated with audience members. I found myself musing “you’re right, I don’t have a brain injury, and I don’t know that experience, but I can imagine and relate because of the limits and depth of my own life experience. People around me – people with brain injuries, other artists, social/health researchers, audience members – will let me know if the work is resonating or not.” Or “I can imagine a metaphor or image that aligns with ideas and stories being told to me – that metaphor provides a side view of those stories, as a different way of seeing it.” Or “Those dance sequences may not speak to specific text, but broader, abstract themes – and they can provide a space for audience members to experience the ideas differently.” At the root of these musings was the ways that I was in the middle of my artistic practice, as an embodied, imaginative, vulnerable human being. Additionally, I began to consider how I was always creating in relation to others, balancing how I worked not to overtake other people’s experiences without self-erasure.

As such, given scholarly discussions as well as my practice as an artist-researcher, through this dissertation I use the lens of the artist-researcher’s experience to explore the process of creating theatre based on research as a form of exploration unto itself, in conversation with but

\textsuperscript{1} Throughout this dissertation, I predominantly refer to and explore the process of artist-researchers, understood as those who undertake a scholarly exploration through artistic form(s). However, I additionally refer to ‘arts-based qualitative researchers,’ understood as those taking up arts methods as an extension of qualitative research.
different from qualitative health and social research. Through a phenomenologically-informed interpretive case study, using the research-informed play *Cracked: new light on dementia* as my case, I will draw together scholarly conversations taking place in the social and health sciences and the arts to stretch the boundaries of arts-based research. Ultimately, with this dissertation I propose a conceptual framework that I term ‘an aesthetic of relationality,’ understood as an embodied, imaginative and foolish relationship among research participants/community members, social/health/artist-researchers and audience members within space and time. This framework importantly challenges the “aesthetic of objectivity” that is dominant in arts-based social and health sciences and that assumes a linear trajectory between research findings and performance (Denzin, 2003, p. 73). Those taking up an aesthetic of objectivity assume that the multiplicity of people involved in the performance process, such as social/health researchers and artist-researchers, and audience members do not have an interpretive role in the process. This perspective additionally overlooks the ways that performance is embodied, imaginative and foolish.

**Chapter summaries**

In Chapter 2 I provide an in-depth overview of literature related to research-informed theatre and a description and critique of an aesthetic of objectivity, drawing from literature across paradigms and disciplines. This includes the critical and interpretive paradigms in qualitative research, and perspectives on performance including scholarly literature from the performance paradigm in the social sciences, the arts, and theatre creation. The purpose of this chapter is to provide context for this study and explore how the body is conceptualized across paradigms as well as the ways imagination is both drawn upon and overlooked.

Chapter 3 explicates three theoretical concepts which will frame the analysis of my data: embodiment, imagination and foolishness. First I draw on theory and philosophy to discuss the notion of embodiment as the relationship between bodies and spaces. Second, I link the notions of embodiment with imagination by discussing the ways imagination is centred in our own pre-reflective, embodied experiences of the world. Imagination can be understood as extending our experience and ideas beyond what is immediately present to our senses by, in part, drawing on our previous embodied experience as a starting point to relate. Lastly, I discuss the concept of foolishness; as I progressed through my study, I began to recognize that the concepts of embodiment and imagination were not fully supporting the analysis of my data. Expanding my theoretical frame to include the concept of foolishness allowed me to better articulate the ways
artist-researchers engage in their work vulnerably and bravely, risking failure and ridiculousness. My intention with Chapter 3 is to provide clear and concise conceptual terms to better understand the ways that artist-researchers engage their bodies as imaginative and foolish spaces for engaging in the creative process of research-informed theatre. In Chapter 4, I will explicate my study methodology - a phenomenologically-informed interpretive case study - attending to how artist-researchers discuss and engage in their own process of creating research-informed theatre. This will include some background information on Cracked as my case-study, data collection strategies, and details about the ways I analysed my data. Finally I provide detailed descriptions of each of my participants, including myself as both researcher and co-participant.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I draw on data to explicate the ways that artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt as part of their exploratory work. Chapter 5 focuses on the ways that artist-researchers work relationally with original research findings and each other. I draw on the words and actions of artist-researchers on Cracked, including actors and myself as playwright/director, to highlight the ways that playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting intertwine throughout the creative process of research-informed theatre. I explore several examples throughout the creative process of developing Cracked, including improvisation and theatrical exploration, transcripts and video footage of interviews with actors, my own writing process as a research-informed playwright, as well as an in-depth analysis of the play’s opening scene. In Chapter 6, I expand the concepts playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting to include the ways audience members are anticipated to engage with the research-informed play and what these understandings mean for the ways artist-researchers engage in their creative process. In Chapter 7 I discuss the aesthetic space created as artist-researchers relationally playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt vis-à-vis experiences of research participants, their own experiences, and imagined audience members. I articulate the notion of an aesthetic of relationality that challenges an aesthetic of objectivity.

I conclude with Chapter 8 where I discuss practical and scholarly implications for this framework. This includes the theoretical importance of engaging with discomfort and the disruptive nature of the artist-researcher’s embodied and imaginative work. An aesthetic of relationality additionally provides an alternative frame to discuss the ‘credibility’ or ‘validity’ of research-informed theatre and arts-based research more broadly.
2. **Research-informed theatre and an aesthetic of objectivity**

Interestingly, at the core of why they are turning to research-informed theatre, qualitative researchers discuss the increased desire and need to draw the body into their research practices and the dissemination of their findings. Additionally, they write about the need to move beyond the constraints of the written word and the limits of text (Goldstein, 2001; Kontos & Naglie, 2006; McCall, Becker, & Meshejian, 1990; Turner & Turner, 1982; White & Belliveau, 2010). With the traditional focus on text, the body is overlooked, and turning to research-informed theatre has allowed researchers to recapture the body from original data gathering settings (Denzin, 1997; Gray et al., 2000; Gray, Sinding, & Fitch, 2001; Kontos & Naglie, 2006). The performing body brings an immediate physical and emotional presence to the way the research findings reach broader audiences, often lost in the flattening effect of textual representations. As an extension of this, the performance has the potential to situate those bodies in complex social, cultural, political and historical contexts in more immediate ways through the project’s story and script, including, for example, the location of the story, and characters who might represent particular cultures or professions. Research-informed theatre offers the opportunity for the overt inclusion of multiple bodies, such as the performers, and as such the inclusion of multiple perspectives becomes overt as well (Dupuis et al., 2011; Jonas-Simpson et al., 2012; McCall et al., 1990; Mitchell, Jonas-Simpson, & Ivonoffsiki, 2006; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008; Smith, 1994). Each performer, for example, has the potential to interpret and represent a different perspective drawn from the research findings. With the inclusion of multiple perspectives, there is a forced move away from the ‘all-knowing’ researcher. The expert position of the neutral researcher, valued in positivist research traditions, promotes a streamlined version of truth which can obscure other perspectives (Denzin, 1997, 2003; Goldstein, 2001, 2012b; Gray et al., 2000; McCall et al., 1990). Additionally, performance has the potential to evoke an embodied or emotional response from audience members, making the research relevant to a range of people and provoking critical reflection (Boydell et al., 2012; Dupuis et al., 2011; Kontos et al., 2012).

**An aesthetic of objectivity: denying embodied knowledge**

Despite that qualitative researchers are claiming to ‘do things differently’, research-informed theatre in the social and health sciences continues to be informed by the very positivist philosophical assumptions of neutrality, objectivity and rationality that researchers are claiming to challenge by turning to performance in the first place (Snyder-Young, 2010). This is
particularly apparent in the health sciences which are not planted in the interpretivist or critical paradigms, but in positivism. Consequently, while the body is cited as one of the core reasons for turning to performance in the first place, the multiplicity of embodied experiences that are intimately involved in the development process of research-informed theatre are generally not considered (Mienczakowski, 2009; Nisker, 2010).

As part of this oversight, there is little comprehension of how it is that the embodiment and imagination of the artist-researcher, the qualitative researcher, and audience members are directly implicated in the artistic and aesthetic processes. The artistic process is understood to be the ways research findings come to be interpreted and shaped through a multiplicity of expressive dimensions. This can include the project’s visual design (such as the costumes or set), the staging (such as the scene transitions) and dramaturgical elements (such as the plot or specific language used). The artistic process, engaging with particular forms and patterns as modes of expression (Bourriaud, 2007), involves a multi-faceted aesthetic or sensory relationship among individuals, things, ideas, and social, political, cultural, historical contexts. Ultimately, aesthetic engagement takes place between what the artist-researchers create – understood as the artistic work – and the sensory engagement on the part of audience members (Jackson, 2007, p. 37). Whether there is artistic intent or not, I argue that all research-informed theatre holds the potential for aesthetic engagement between the project and its audience. It is the aesthetic engagement between project and audience members that connects a project’s pedagogical and research goals to audience members; it is what artist-researchers do in crafting the project that contributes to the aesthetic engagement.

Additionally, these artistic/aesthetic processes have the potential to make the interpretive work of the artist-researcher more obvious by engaging expressive modes such as imagery, metaphor, colour, sound, music (among others). There is additionally the potential to move well beyond the ‘real’ or ‘natural’ to include more abstract expressions, such as a postdramatic approach. I will more clearly define postdramatic theatre in Chapter 6; however briefly, postdramatic theatre can be described as an approach to theatre that does not rely on traditional dramatic or narrative structures, but rather its focus is a less logical form of performance that incorporates a range of performance genres (such as music, visual art/design, dance) within the theatrical experience that is more akin to performance art. While this postdramatic approach is certainly not required to make interpretation obvious, it is important to note that these artistic options exist and hold the potential to engage audiences differently. Taking up performance in
artistic ways such as the postdramatic and others can help to move away from positivist approaches that researchers are espousing to challenge. While attending to the artistic/aesthetic processes is critical to moving research and pedagogical goals of the specific project forward, and to advancing the field of research-informed theatre more broadly, how the embodiment of the artist-researcher is drawn upon throughout this process is largely unacknowledged. This is due to the dominance of an aesthetic of objectivity in research-informed theatre work.

Within research and the academy

Sociologist Norman Denzin (2003) works in the area of performance ethnography, where interpretive ethnographers stage reflexive ethnographic performances using their fieldnotes and ethnographic observations to inform the performance (p. ix). He proposes that the “performance-based human disciplines can contribute to radical social change” (p. 3) and that a “postmodern performance aesthetic and evocative epistemology must be developed” (p. 93). In light of this, drawing on the scholarship of cultural and gender studies scholar and documentary film-maker Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991, 1992), Denzin warns of how an aesthetic of objectivity projects a “so-called real world,” which discourages a dialogic or curious approach to the work on the part of audiences (Denzin, 2003, p. 73).

There are several elements central to an aesthetic of objectivity which may partially or in totality influence a particular research-informed theatre project. Firstly, those taking up an aesthetic of objectivity tend to pursue a ‘naturalistic’ and ‘realistic’ approach where people appear to be real and located within real situations (Denzin, 1997, 2003; Snyder-Young, 2010; Trinh, 1992). With an emphasis on “the data doing the talking” (Mienczakowski & Moore, 2008, p. 452), ‘realistic’ or ‘authentic’ representations of the research findings, high in verisimilitude, are encouraged. This element is guided by a realist research tradition, and is especially advocated in qualitative health research (Green & Thorogood, 2004; Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012). Additionally, the artist-researcher is understood as an observer or removed from the process, not as one who creates or ‘invents’ (Clifford, 1986; Denzin, 2003; Goldstein, 2012b; Trinh, 1992). The artist-researcher is obligated to use the performance as a way to present minimally altered research findings. Audience members are understood to be passive recipients of the performance, rather than actively engaged in interpretation (Denzin, 2003; Freire, 2007; Jackson, 2007; Trinh, 1992). There is an additional emphasis on text through this approach, where research participants (or performers in their place) tell their stories from text derived from focus group or interview transcripts.
Within an aesthetically objective framework, social and health qualitative researchers approach research-informed theatre with 1) unawareness about the kinds of aesthetic interpretation taking place that are inherent in the process (McCall et al., 1990; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008); 2) the assumption that artistic methods obscure authentic representation of the research findings (Gray et al., 2000; Mienczakowski, 2009; Mienczakowski & Moore, 2008; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008); 3) a lack of recognition of the interpretive work done by the multitude of people involved in the performance work including researcher, writer and performer (Colantonio et al., 2008; Mienczakowski, 2009; Rossiter, K. et al., 2008; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008); 4) a lack of attention to how the body and embodied knowing are drawn upon through the research-informed theatre creative process (Mienczakowski, 2009; Rossiter & Godderis, 2011; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008); 5) a lack of attention to how the audience is involved in interpreting the research-informed play (Colantonio et al., 2008; Gray & Sinding, 2002; Rossiter, Katherine et al., 2008); and 6) a devaluing of embodied knowledge (Gray et al., 2000; McCall et al., 1990; Mienczakowski, 2009).

Critiques of an assumed objectivity within qualitative research, specifically ethnography, are pertinent to my critique of an aesthetic of objectivity. Anthropologist James Clifford (1986) discusses how ethnographers with a strong colonial history often being placed in a European or “Western” position of authority, invent “partial truths” through their writing (p. 7) rather than representing “culture” as an “object of description and critique” (p. 3). Through the constructed, artificial process of writing itself, ethnographers play an integrated role in the invention of their research findings (p. 2). Ethnographers are directly implicated in the writing process, and bring with them a range of social, cultural, political and historical assumptions that inform the interpretation and analysis of their findings. Simply put, ethnographers do not represent their research findings through their writing, they invent them.

Recognition of this inventive work has led to an increasing number of ethnographers turning to arts-based research approaches (Denzin, 2003; Goldstein, 2012b; Kontos & Naglie, 2006; Leavy, 2008). Arts-based approaches move beyond the written text towards other expressive media and have the potential to openly acknowledge the direct involvement of the arts-based qualitative researcher and/or artist-researcher in the invention or creation, rather than only representation, of the research findings. However, with the “researchers’ ethical responsibility to create authentic representations of participants realities” (Jonas-Simpson et al.,
2012, p. 1951; see also Mienczakowski, 2009; Mienczakowski & Moore, 2008; Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010), the inventive nature of arts-based research is approached with trepidation.

As the academy is attempting to engage the broader public with research, the importance of questioning the ways in which this occurs and to whom we are responsible should not be underestimated. Discussions about the part that aesthetics play, if even recognized at all, in this communicative or expressive work are often framed as *artistic licence* (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2012; see also Clay & Krempel, 1985; Gray et al., 2001; Mienczakowski, 2009; Saldaña, 2005). This language is problematic and implies that the artist takes liberties with the expression of the research findings through artistic form, rather than providing space for audience members to engage aesthetically with the material. Discussions about the tensions among notions of representation, invention and aesthetics are overlooking that, in fact, an aesthetic *interpretation* occurs through the creative or inventive process. The aesthetic is usually understood as a compelling way to engage audiences with pedagogical and research objectives. This ever present aesthetic interpretation that occurs through the creation of the research-informed play, similar to the process of interpretive writing for the ethnographer, is overlooked due to the dominance of an aesthetic of objectivity. As an extension of this oversight, how artist-researchers, who are intimately implicated in the artistic and aesthetic processes, draw on their own embodiment and imagination in the creation of research-informed theatre is also overlooked.

Understanding the strong influence of positivism in the academy, particularly in the health sciences, sheds light on how bodies are overlooked as an integral part of interpretation. As an example, within medicine, heavily steeped in positivism, bodies are viewed through a reductionist lens, and bodies and illness are almost exclusively seen as biological, individually-based phenomena rather than cultural or social. This biomedical perspective of bodies with its reductionist, objective emphasis has largely been adopted by health researchers. The positivist paradigm is largely influential in qualitative health research (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 28) where neutrality and distance are encouraged with a corresponding suppression of embodied ways of knowing.

Much of the currency of qualitative research in the interpretive and critical paradigms, however, stems from extensive discussions about the relevance of how the researcher situates herself in relation to the research being undertaken. Positioning oneself as a researcher allows various stakeholders to understand the researcher’s particular approach, values, and the
philosophical assumptions informing how the research is undertaken. The researcher is not removed from the research process, and ultimately the research itself offers a particular perspective that is not objective (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). A range of critical scholars have helped to move this discussion forward particularly in the area of ‘voice’ (see for example Behar & Gordon, 1995; hooks, 1984; Kondo, 1995; Smith, 1999; Trinh, 1991). Acknowledging that there is no “voice from nowhere” that gives a pure representation (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 123) has moved critical and interpretivist researchers to include the voices of their participants as part of the process and dissemination of research. Also included in these discussions is the notion of reflexivity, which is the process of moving beyond merely situating oneself in the research, to include a “conscious experiencing of the self as inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 124). These concepts are relevant and aligned with what I described regarding the artist’s process in my introduction, and my aim here is to build on these discussions. These underpinning assumptions are being left behind in research-informed theatre that takes up an aesthetically objective framework.

Relevant here is critical qualitative health researcher Joan Eakin (2015) who discusses the researcher’s creative presence. She emphasizes the importance of qualitative researchers viewing themselves as active instruments within the research process, engaging its evolution, rather than feeling stifled by the constraints of the project as originally planned. She discusses the ways that researchers must not assume to be removed from the research process, but acknowledge their positionality and standpoint. She stresses the importance of using your knowledge, emotions, stakes, prejudices, interests among others in order to enhance the quality of qualitative research. As Eakin says: “Don’t just confess them and feel absolved, put them to use.” As a critical qualitative researcher, your creative presence can become a resource within the process, help you open up questions and delve deeper beyond superficial analysis. She emphasizes that critical qualitative researchers, through their creative presence, do not assume that the data speak for themselves; the researcher’s presence, as creative, flexible and reflexive, is bound up within analysis.

Anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996) additionally helps us understand how locating yourself as a researcher is about, at its core, being vulnerable (p. 29) and this vulnerability helps us shift toward viewing identification rather than exclusively difference (p. 165). Vulnerability, Behar acknowledges, can be disorienting and is not for everyone. If anthropology’s history is rooted in
‘giving voice’ to Other people, and reading the culture of Others, then in traditional anthropology there is no greater taboo than self-revelation. However, as those who had previously been “the ethnographized rather than the ethnographer” (p. 27) have started conducting studies themselves, important debates have opened up about the lines between participant and observer. Feminist scholars, for example, studying and writing about women “have devoted a considerable amount of energy to reflecting on biography and autobiography, and the difficult question of how women are to make other women the subjects of their gaze without objectifying them and thus betraying them” (p. 28). Behar argues that, ultimately, if we are asking those we observe to be vulnerable, asking them to let us look into their lives in some way, we have an obligation to allow ourselves as researchers to be vulnerable and implicated in the research process (p. 24). She asks about the kinds of impressions that we as researchers leave on our participants, and in turn, how research participants make impressions upon us as researchers. And she attests that by engaging in research and writing vulnerably we are asking our audiences, as readers and witnesses, to engage intellectually and emotionally (p. 20). This vulnerable relationship between the participant, the researcher and audience can help us as we move ahead to think about research-informed theatre as an embodied, imaginative practice, which I will return to in Chapter 3.

Despite Behar’s and Eakin’s work, generally discussions in the qualitative research literature about situating oneself as a researcher stay at the level of meaning-making and conscious, intellectual reflection. This emphasis on cognition tends to overlook the “in the moment” or affective aspects of qualitative research (Thrift, 2007). With the notion of reflexivity, for example, the focus remains on critically exploring our position as researchers. Without diminishing the relevance of this important practice, this perspective overlooks the spontaneous and gut responses to the work and how researchers draw directly on their own embodiment. What is additionally overlooked is how the physical body might be engaged to understand research findings, including the experiences of research participants. Critical and interpretive qualitative researchers tend to engage in intellectual exploration and do not draw on their own physical body, including movements, gestures and actions, to explore or differently understand the experiences of research participants. The embodiment of the artist-researcher, including the physical body as well as emotional, spontaneous responses, is directly implicated in the creative process of research-informed theatre which moves beyond the emphasis on cognitive engagement and beyond an aesthetic of objectivity.
Within theatre practices

It is important to note that there are artists as well as scholars in theatre and performance studies who are engaging with performances based on ‘realness’, who also struggle with notions of objectivity. These practices and discussions are emerging out of verbatim and documentary theatre, an area where plays are created based on real events and experiences. These plays tend to emerge when traditional theatrical works do not speak to immediate social, cultural and political needs (Smith, 1994; Snyder-Young, 2010). Applied theatre scholar and practitioner Dani Snyder Young (2010) highlights the ways that ‘documentary interview-style’ performances dominate in performances based on the ‘real’. Through professional verbatim/documentary theatre emerging in the 1990s, continuing to present-day, “actors perform the words of actual interview participants, often directly addressing the audience as if the audience were the interviewer-as-observer. Many of these performances intentionally rely heavily on monologue form, using extended sections of interview texts representing the richness and complexity of participants’ language and lived experience” (p. 885). As Snyder-Young continues: “Artists certainly select what material to include and how to assemble it, but this process is not often emphasized in performance. In all, these mainstream performances create a sense that objective reality has been captured, truth is dramatized onstage, and facts are presented credibly” (p. 885). Snyder-Young acknowledges that, in professional documentary and verbatim theatre contexts such as the work of Anna Deavere Smith (1994, 2000) and Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project (2001), this work holds the potential to reveal what was not noticed previously, pose questions and make connections to larger phenomena. Indeed, in the 1990s when this form of theatre first made waves on Broadway in New York City, “their aesthetic simplicity and immediate connection to real-world events seemed a breath of fresh air in a sea of escapist entertainment” (p. 885). These approaches to verbatim/documentary theatre align with those taking up an aesthetic of objectivity in the social and health sciences.

A recent symposium produced by University of Toronto’s Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies called ‘Festival of Original Theatre: Staging Realities’ (February 5-7, 2016) provides a good example of the ways that notions of objectivity cause tensions in verbatim/documentary theatre. Several scholars at the Symposium referenced the ways many practicing artists attempt to engage in a kind of objective presentation of interview transcripts, audio recordings or videotaped footage of other people’s experiences. With many of the theatrical productions cited in the scholarly presentations, there was an acknowledged distrust of
theatricality as it was seen to detract from the “reality” the verbatim/documentary artists were attempting to recreate (for example Aikman, 2016; Jones, 2016; Thistle, 2016). There was an emphasis on adhering to the original text upon which the verbatim/documentary performances were based. Some of these scholars discussing this verbatim/documentary theatre work wondered aloud in a post-panel discussion why these artists chose theatre as the medium to present this documentary work as a live performance form. They questioned what it was that theatre offered beyond the written text, and struggled to grasp the “liveness” or the “experience” of the theatre that brought something different beyond relying exclusively on the written word. One poignant question from audience member and renowned theatre studies scholar, Dr. Marvin Carlson, was why verbatim and documentary theatre scholars focus on the playwright and text to such an extent that they overlook the work of the verbatim/documentary theatre actor.

These scholars suggest the importance of the live experience of theatre and the need to further explore the interpretive role of the actor and other verbatim/documentary theatre artists beyond the playwright. I would suggest they also consider the embodied, imaginative, spatial, temporal nature of performance in their scholarly discussions. The verbatim/documentary performance moves beyond the flattened text by moving into an actual physical space, where bodies move and speak within this space and within time. With an attempt to adhere strictly to the original source material understood as text, what is overlooked is the way the performance has already moved away from that original source material simply with different people (as embodied) speaking, moving and gesturing. This is an inherent aspect of the art form and should not be shunned, but embraced.

**Building upon a strong aesthetic foundation**

It is important to note that not all work in the area of research-informed theatre overlooks the artistic/aesthetic potential as part of the creative process. As such, I will draw on some of the strong aesthetic work arts-based qualitative researchers and artist-researchers are engaged with to explore how this work might serve to inform an aesthetic of relationality.

Firstly, I will focus on the newly emerging scholarly field performance-as-research, sometimes referred to as ‘research-creation,’ ‘practice-as-research,’ or ‘artistic research,’ where artist-researchers engage with artistic practices as academic research practices (see Balkema & Slager, 2004; Manning, 2015; Nelson, 2013; Thain, 2008). Performance-as-research has taken form in a number of ways such as the investigative work of actors and actor training (Watson, 2009), performance as research for the classroom exploring whiteness as cultural critique
(Warren, 2009), dialogic performance art placing emphasis on audience members as co-investigators (Arsem, 2009), oral history and narrative techniques challenging dominant academic protocol (Nielson, 2009), and choreography and dance training as embodied means to explore personal struggle in relation to social, historical and cultural moments (Foster, 2009). Performance-as-research practices include “integrating practice-based methodologies, laboratory exploration, and a range of traditional, tacit and embodied knowledges, with history, theory, and criticism of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies” (Hunter, 2009, p. 199). Additionally, this work advances the idea that performance can be a form of intellectual and academic inquiry and “calls into question what gets valued as knowledge” (Riley & Hunter, 2009, p. xv). If positivist standards of neutrality and objectivity are more highly valued in the academy, then engaging with artistic practice as a form of academic inquiry, which openly relies on tacit and embodied knowledges within the interpretive process, challenges epistemological issues of validity and accuracy as well. These arts scholars are deeply engaged with aesthetic interpretation as part of their academic inquiries, embrace the body as a site of interpretation, engage with the multiple aspects of the art form in interpretation, and acknowledge audience members as co-interpreters. While my primary audience might be those in the social and health sciences, my intention is to additionally align my empirical study with these arts practices and scholarly conversations. My intention is to draw on the insights of these arts practitioners and scholars to challenge an aesthetic of objectivity and to articulate an alternative framework.

Theatre scholar, practitioner and qualitative researcher Johnny Saldaña (1998, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011) holds a unique position within this world of research-informed theatre, as his experience bridges theatre and social science research practices. I have praised Saldaña’s important work (Gray & Kontos, 2015) emphasizing the significance of strong artistic work and suggest how his theoretical insights might be taken further. Saldaña engages with two forms of research-informed theatre: ethnotheatre and ethnodrama. Ethnotheatre employs traditional theatrical techniques to mount performances based on ethnographic field notes and the stories of research participants (Saldaña, 1998, p. 181). Whereas ethnodrama is a genre of dramatic literary writing with emphasis being placed on the play script that emerges from a variety of sources, including interview or focus group transcripts, observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories, and/or print and media artifacts (Saldaña, 2011, p. 13).

With his roots in theatre, much of Saldaña’s scholarly work lies in providing guidelines for qualitative researchers interested in engaging with ethnotheatre and ethnodrama (2003, 2005,
In his recent book, Saldaña (2011) gives detailed guidance about how to become a better ethnotheatrical playwright by laying out details of theatrical elements to consider, including the theatrical performance space, properties and costumes, lighting, sound and music, among others. Saldaña champions strong artistic quality in ethnotheatrical work, and in developing an ethnotheatrical aesthetic, he reminds playwrights that the “mounting of ethnographic reality on stage is at its most effective when the production assumes a nonrealistic – read: “theatrical” – style” (2011, p. 204). He cautions emerging ethnotheatrical playwrights of the traps of “boring” (p. 204) work by simply replicating research findings on stage.

Ethnotheatrical playwrights, he attests, can employ theatricality as a means to interpret the research findings in an engaging way (p. 206). He implores emerging ethnotheatrical playwrights to “stop thinking like a social scientist and start thinking like an artist” (p. 209) and attests that by trusting “artistic impulses” (p. 210) it is possible to create an evocative play with theatricality yet authenticity. Good ethnotheatrical work must have both “artistic rigor” and a “truthful text” – what he labels as “ethnodramatic validity” (2005, p. 32; see also 2011, p. 210). He encourages writers to “free themselves from the hegemony of traditional and stifling academic discourse, and to allow their creativity and dramatic intuition to imagine aesthetic possibilities onstage” (2005, p. 33).

While Saldaña advocates for a strong ethnotheatrical aesthetic, he offers little theoretically to support this perspective and how unengaging work might be problematic. The theatrical interpretation Saldaña refers to is not simply a means for the research findings to be more compelling, but to deepen goals of inquiry and with the potential to affect change. Additionally, he does not discuss how a strong performance aesthetically has the potential to provide a deep affective experience for audience members. As such, he does not address the ways that affective experience in the moment of the performance, as potentially joyful, sorrowful, painful or beautiful (before or apart from articulating the experience through words), influences intellectual engagement with the performance event itself, and thereby fosters reflection (Nicholson, 2012).

Additionally, Saldaña’s definition of “ethnodramatic validity” needs clarification. His encouragement for the emerging ethnotheatrical playwright to trust her artistic impulses or dramatic intuition is important in challenging an aesthetic of objectivity, but he provides little explication of the source of such impulses or intuition. Is he referring to the emerging ethnotheatrical playwright’s embodiment, imagination, or some combination of the two?
Additionally, Saldaña does not directly link audiences into these discussions about ethnodramatic validity. Elsewhere in his writing he discusses how artist-researchers have “an obligation to our participants and audiences to balance creativity with credibility and trustworthiness” (2011, p. 207, emphasis added) and as such Saldaña implies that audience members are a part of what makes a particular ethnotheatrical play ethnodramatically valid. Though not fully elaborated, this does highlight the importance of our responsibility to our audiences, who we aim to connect with through the performance. The vagueness of this connection, however, contributes to the lack of depth regarding the notion of ethnodramatic validity. I have built on Saldaña’s bold, important assertions by developing an aesthetic of relationality as a conceptual framework for the creation of research-informed theatre that explores this interrelationship among the artist-researcher, the research findings (including the experiences of research participants) and the intended audience.

The work of critical ethnographer and research-informed playwright Tara Goldstein (2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2012a, 2012b) is relevant here as she has begun to draw attention to the interrelationship among the artist-researcher, the research findings, and the intended audience. Goldstein, who coined the term research-informed theatre, explains how she was looking for a way to engage her pre-service teacher students in a sophisticated reflection of issues of diversity in schooling (2012b, p. 30). Specifically, she discusses her emergence into the world of research-informed theatre by collecting data about bilingual school life through more traditional ethnographic means and then turning to “the blending of realist, interpretive and dramatic techniques to construct an ethnographic play” (2012b, p. 3). As a critical ethnographer, Goldstein grounds herself in the awareness that anthropological and sociological research and its texts are only part of the truth given their social, cultural and historical situatedness.

Goldstein has discussed the need for those engaged with research-informed theatre to identify and grapple with the multiple commitments that this work requires (2008a, 2008b). She lays out nicely the tensions between “aesthetic, ethnographic and pedagogical commitments” (2008b, p. 93) and stresses the importance of being cognizant of the needs within these three areas in project decision making. Specifically she discusses how, despite tensions, these commitments also have the potential to support each other; “attention to aesthetics as well as to ethnographic fidelity is important in creating a performed ethnography that is pedagogically powerful” (2008b, p. 93).
With Goldstein and other colleagues (2014), I have begun to unpack how these commitments are intertwined by posing a series of interrelated questions for artist-researchers to acknowledge when designing or planning a research-informed theatre project. In addition to contemplating aesthetic, research and pedagogical commitments, we suggested considering how artist-researchers are responsible to three groups of people in developing research-informed theatre: the original participants, audience members and the team of artist-researchers. Questions we suggested are important to consider in project planning include: Have we been transparent and clear about what we plan to do with the information/stories participants have shared with us? Have we created a space in our planning for member checking? At what moment(s) in the process is member checking important? What are our responsibilities to our audience(s)? Is it important that we provide the audience with information about the research project? What are the strongest ways to engage audience members through the performance? What are the responsibilities to the research-artistic team? During the workshopping of the script with actors, to what extent do we see the actors’ work as part of the analysis process? Is it important that the actors who are workshopping or performing the script come from the same ethnicity, culture, race, and class as the research participants?

Through the development of an aesthetic of relationality I have built on this important theoretical foundation regarding the relationship among aesthetic, research and pedagogical commitments, as well as how we recognize as part of our creative work the interrelationship among those we are responsible to. I have extended this relationship further by asking how the embodiment and imagination of individuals within these groups are implicated in the creative process, beginning with the artist-researcher’s. Additionally, Goldstein’s deep respect for aesthetic interpretation is seen through her ongoing commitment to continually refining her artistic skills (including additional training in playwriting and receiving a Master of Fine Arts) as well as boldly prioritizing discussions about aesthetics in her scholarly writing about research-informed theatre, alongside discussions of research and pedagogy. Goldstein’s background and strengths, however, lie in pedagogy and social science research and, as such, her theoretical work is deeper in these areas. In my doctoral research I have sought to achieve further depth to the theoretical discussions of aesthetics by focusing on how artist-researchers engage their own bodies as imaginative, foolish spaces as part of the creative process.

There is also strong aesthetic work in health-based research-informed theatre. Health studies scholar Kate Rossiter (2011), who has a background in performance studies as well as a
PhD in public health, together with her colleague medical sociologist and historian Rebecca Godderis, discuss the development of a play about ethical issues surrounding influenza pandemic planning. Specifically, they discuss how they engaged mimetic distance (which they define as the relationship between the performance and what it aims to represent), fictionalization, and hermeneutics (or interpretation), as a means to “capture a sense of complexity and nuance in regards to research findings” (p. 653) as well as to “provide a space for audience members to reflect and grapple with [the] complicated and often conflicting issues” that emerged from their research (p. 654). Rossiter and Godderis describe how they situate their play within historical contexts, the 1918 influenza pandemic specifically, as a way to give audience members a fictional and conceptual distance while engaging with complex ethical issues about pandemic planning. They describe the script’s development process and cite a hermeneutic approach that guided this work. Specifically, in addition to Rossiter writing the script itself, they collaborated with university students in creative and improvisational exploration, as well as engaging in several staged readings with different key audiences to give insight into the play’s theatrical and research validity.

I applaud Rossiter and Godderis’ strong stance on situating their work within a broader methodological framework for research-informed theatre that embraces interpretation. However the authors focus the interpretive work of the play on language and texts as well as the interpretive process of writing the script, overlooking the body and other aesthetic opportunities that are beyond words. I challenge their proclamation that “the process of writing the script itself was an entirely linguistic process” (p. 674) given that the embodiment of those involved in the interpretive creative process was directly implicated. As an example, the authors discuss how they engaged students in improvisation as part of the development process, including how this work with students helped structure the order of the scenes in the script. Beyond this mention of the script’s structure, there is no reference to the embodied nature of improvisational work nor consideration of how including the embodied responses of the students to the material informed Rossiter’s writing process. Additionally, the authors do not mention how Rossiter herself engaged her own embodiment and imagination as part of her writing process. With the emphasis on language and text (indeed the authors indicate that the play was performed as a staged-reading), additional aesthetic opportunities such as staging, the performers’ presence, and visual design were not considered. Consequently, in addition to their oversight of embodiment and imagination, Rossiter and Godderis also overlook that the performance is relational and spatial
suggesting a more linear interpretive process between research findings and research-informed play.

Rossiter and Godderis also discuss the importance of situating the play within the historical lens of the 1918 pandemic to give audience members a mimetic distance to highlight cultural and social tensions around the politics of health, particularly regarding gender, race and otherness. This fictional interpretation of research findings as a *distancing* measure allowed “the social and cultural themes of the play to become *differently apprehendable* [sic] to the audience” (p. 675, emphasis in original). While this is important, it overlooks how it is that audience members are additionally *drawn closer* to the research findings through the interpretive process and how the affective experience of the performance event itself might contribute to reflexivity. The authors acknowledge that audience members were moved emotionally by the play, but offer little insight into how the embodied and imaginative creative process might have contributed to this affective, aesthetic engagement.

As a final point, and to support Rossiter and Godderis’ discussion about the audience’s reception of their play, there is emerging evidence from health researchers indicating that research-informed theatre affects audience members deeply in their bodies and emotionally (Kontos et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011). For example, audience members have reported that, when witnessing a play about families living with dementia called *I’m Still Here!* they saw things they had previously taken for granted in a new way, they saw themselves directly in the play, and related to what was happening. Audience members discussed how they felt the impact of the play in their bodies, describing “being smacked, struck, hit, jolted, moved and hammered” (Mitchell et al., 2011, p. 385). Additionally, Pia Kontos and her colleagues (2012) found in an evaluation of the research-informed play *After the Crash: a play about brain injury* that health care practitioners working with people with traumatic brain injury were not only moved emotionally, but changed their clinical practice after seeing the play. Practitioners were observed to speak more in lay terms to their clients, rather than resorting to specialised medical jargon, to support and engage in more emotional work with their clients, to cease speaking ‘over’ their clients and be inclusive of them regardless of cognitive issues acquired from the injury, and to include the client’s family in care, moving beyond working only with the client. The authors note that even 12 months after watching the play, “practitioners had committed to memory the impact and the aesthetics of the play, allowing them to continue to be emotionally engaged with its key messages” (p. 1627).
While this work addresses the important ways in which research-informed theatre impacted the practitioners, it left unexamined why it had the impact it did in terms of the audience’s aesthetic experience of the play and how the embodied and imaginative creative process might have contributed to this experience as well. The development of an aesthetic of relationality gives theoretical depth to these findings, suggesting insight into why it is that the embodied, imaginative creative process for the play provided space for the embodied and affective responses of the audience members, allowing key messages to continue to resonate with them well beyond the performance itself.

Many theatre scholars and practitioners understand theatre to be an embodied, spatial, temporal and imaginative art form in that it takes place between the actor in “the empty space” (Brook, 1968) and the audience member watching. Theatre lives in the enactment of the script, and involves the live, gestural work of the performers (Schechner, 2003). Renowned Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1968) defines theatre as “what takes place between spectator and actor” (p. 32). His work came at a time, during the 1960s and 70s, when theatre practitioners were investigating and re-visioning theatre as intense, precise investigations of the actor-audience relationship, away from a theatre of spectacle. Theatre is about the actor’s body and voice, and the actions taken by that body and voice in relation to the audience.

Contemporary theatre and performance theorists build on this modernist approach to the theatrical experience by questioning whether theatre only takes place between performers and audience members. For example American theatre director Anne Bogart (2001) discusses the “drama of co-presence” (p. 67), and she includes other relational aspects of theatre such as actor to actor, actor to director, actor to audience member, actor to thing (prop, set piece, lights, etc.), audience member to thing, audience member to audience member, etc. This co-presence is a circular relationship, and one facet of the relationship (such as the actor) is creatively dependent on the other facets (such as the director, a prop, or, of course, the audience), always adjusting and responding to what is being brought forward. This performance experience is fluid and affective, in that it can be understood as “a richly expressive/aesthetic feeling-cum-behaviour of continual becoming” (Thrift, 2007, p. 175), and draws on conscious and pre-reflective embodied experience to make sense of the event.

Theatre studies scholars Sarah Bay-Cheng and Amy Strahler Holzapfel (2010) additionally suggest a more dynamic, relational conception of theatre as a network. This notion of the network pushes past theatre understood as only taking place between performers and
audience members to include a multiplicity of facets, such as multiple people, space, time, as well as previous experience, memory and things that might be ‘dead’ (such as objects like props, and text or written documentations). The idea of theatre bringing to life what was once dead is relevant here, and aligns with how, through research-informed theatre, the attempt is made to bring to life research findings taken out of their original ‘live’ context. Theatre’s ephemerality allows for audiences to engage in the performance event itself “in the moment” (Thrift, 2007) as something new, but can also “be a container for all prior moments” (Bay-Cheng & Holzapfel, 2010, p. 20). These prior moments include those of the artist-researchers, audience members and moments from the research findings. This suggests a temporal process that is a “dynamic and inherently unstable… constructed system of communication, a web that can bridge, divide or intersect both discrete and overlapping times and spaces” (Bay-Cheng & Holzapfel, 2010, pp. 24-25). My conceptual framework of an aesthetic of relationality aligns with Bay-Cheng and Holzapfel’s notion of theatre as a network.

Through theatrical or performative exploration, theatre artists (including actors, playwrights, directors, etc.) engage in ‘embodied research,’ which is how this work is referred to in the scholarly area of performance-as-research (Riley & Hunter, 2009). Embodied research “denies both the tenet of objectivity and the reproduction of other findings by other parties” (Watson, 2009, p. 87) because it is distinctly personal, emotional, and experiential, mixing tacit and vulnerable engagement with more reflexive, cognitive artistic interpretive decisions. Through this work, “documentation is primarily corporeal” and “supersedes the literary” (Watson, 2009, p. 87).

Documentary theatre playwright, actor and theatre professor Anna Deavere Smith (2000) provides insight into how actors “embody the material” in comparison with more conventional research processes of academics (p. 96). She discusses how, from her perspective, more traditional academics “study” issues and ideas, and how professors “cover the material” with their students. “In the theatre we can’t simply “cover the material”; we “become the material”” (p. 96). Smith’s use of language around the theatre artists’ work (e.g. embody, become, uncover) speaks to a unique level of understanding that the theatre artist must undertake in order to be able to create and perform. With this immersive approach to work (Bogart, 2007), comes an embodied connection to the material and the work at hand. Personal discoveries and reactions to the material become important flags and artists understand that their own personal life experiences are drawn upon throughout the creative process.
Renowned American playwright David Mamet (1998) discusses how a play must “come from the heart” in order to “go to the heart” (p. 21). Yet, this personal, embodied approach cannot stay at this reactive level and in crafting the theatrical work, these responses must move into a more cognitive domain, but always in balance with the personal and intuitive. As Mamet cautions, “what comes from the head is perceived by the audience as manipulative” (1998, p. 21). Mamet’s suggestion that it is the head (i.e. cognition) that holds the potential to manipulate not the heart (i.e. embodied/emotional) is significant and speaks to his understanding of how the work is engaged with. This approach is also culturally, socially, historically and politically situated; artists craft their work within specific contexts and in response to specific ideas and happenings (Bennett, 1990; Brecht, 1964; Carlson, 2004; Filewod, 1987; Mitchell, 2009; Schechner, 2003; Smith, 1994).

Performance studies scholar Ronald Pelias (2008) provides important insight regarding how the performer engages with different aspects of her own body when engaging with embodied research. For example, he describes the ‘knowing body,’ developed through practice in the same way a mathematician practices her craft from simple arithmetic to the highest forms of mathematical calculation; this helps the performer gain greater capacity in using the body as an exploratory instrument that probes and ponders what it encounters (p. 186). Regardless of the ability level, or the social, cultural or political perspective, each artist must draw on her own embodiment (or what she knows in her body from experience) through the performance process. Further, the ‘empathic body’ (p. 187) recognizes points of view other than its own and has the capacity to understand and share in the feelings of others. It is the emphatic body that helps performers create characters. “Performers project themselves into the life circumstances of others and use themselves to determine the nature of the experience” (p. 187). Pelias discusses the importance of focusing on how the other might feel in a particular situation (as opposed to yourself), and allowing one’s body to be open to the other; Pelias emphasises that this access to the other is always incomplete. With the ‘participatory body’ (p. 187), the body learns by doing and its tasks are located in action. Performers, Pelias insists, must commit to others’ ways of being by doing. By living with, or repeating particular actions, the actions become the performer’s own and performers must stretch themselves, moving beyond their regular way of being in the world. Through the ‘political body’ (p. 188) Pelias acknowledges that there is not a neutral body; each is marked by gender, sexuality, ableness, class, race and ethnicity (among others), and carries particular cultural perspectives and biases. With this understanding, bodies
are contested sites; audiences interpret performing bodies in particular ways based on what they are seeing in particular cultural contexts. “The political body recognizes how power functions, dares to explore and expose it, and welcomes the opportunity to subvert it in the name of social justice” (p. 188).

It is useful to extend these understandings of the embodied interpretive work of the theatre artist into spatial, relational contexts. The actor, for example, must work with both embodied and cognitive experiences when developing or rehearsing the performance. In addition to engaging vulnerable and personal experiences, the actor must draw conscious attention to embodied, intuitive responses to the material in crafting the performance, and interpretive decisions are made about the best way to unfold the performance (Bogart, 2001; Mitchell, 2009). When moving to the theatrical performance event itself, this crafted work of the actor must then sit between the cognitive and embodied in the co-presence of the audience; the actor is aware of what she is doing in the performance, but must be in an embodied state of ‘thinking-being’ rather than be purely conscious and reflexive, or completely disengaged. In order to be in co-presence with the audience, among other factors such as texts and object/things, the actor must work in this vulnerable, open state in order for the audience members to find their way into the performance. An actor might talk about how he has to be immersed in a character to ‘be’ that character (embodied), being genuinely engaged with his co-actors on stage, actively listening and responding to that co-actor “in the moment” (Stanislavski, 1989), but additionally, he must also ‘be’ the actor (cognitive), and know that when the lights go dark to indicate the end of a scene a set piece might move across the stage and, as such, he needs to exit the stage.

This embodied, temporal, spatial work of the theatre artist takes place for audience members. In the theatre and performance literature there are extensive discussions about the aesthetic framework, understood as the relationship between stage-action and audience, or ways that audience members come to engage with and experience the live performance event (Aristotle, 1982; Bennett, 1990; Boal, 1979; Brecht, 1964; Brook, 1968; Grotowski, 1976; Jackson, 2007). Audience members are understood to be a vital part of the performance experience and a complex aesthetic framework. As part of this, aesthetic distance is understood to be the points in the play when audience members are pulled out from the action and world of the play (not objective, but distant as in pulled away from the action). When an audience member has become engrossed in the theatre production, an aesthetic closeness has been
achieved (close is not understood as real or accurate, but rather when audience members are drawn in to the action).

A discussion of the myriad ways artists have taken up or critiqued traditional uses of the aesthetic framework is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, briefly as an example, in a radical re-thinking of the stage action/audience relationship, German theatre director Bertolt Brecht was highly critical of Aristotelian-based theatre. Aristotelian drama is one grounded in mimesis (imitation or representation of actions in the ‘real’ world) and catharsis (the process of releasing, thereby being relieved from strong emotions). Even more specifically, through an Aristotelian tragedy, audience members entrust themselves to the actors in order to be taken on an emotional journey parallel to that of the characters in the play linked to change and transformation. A particular relationship is set up between stage-action (what the actors are doing and what happens in the play) and the audiences’ experience, as the drama is structured to reflect these assumptions: the action takes place between characters on stage and audience members witnessing the story taking place in front of them. While Aristotle wrote Poetics in the fourth century BC (Aristotle, 1982), his theories have indisputable ascendency on the structure and purpose in contemporary European and European-influenced drama, as well as being the subject of critique. Brecht, who was deeply influenced by Marxism, argued this approach to theatre maintained class structures where audience members give authority to those on the stage, rather than engaging critically in the drama. As such, he aimed to challenge the perceptive processes of audience members by making the familiar strange through new theatrical tools and a re-thinking of the ways that the action takes place on stage (Brecht, 1964, p. 143; Jackson, 2007, p. 142). Through epic theatre Brecht attempted to move away from a cathartic theatre and develop a theatre “with the power to provoke social change,” and as such attempted to “reactivate stage-audience exchange” (Bennett, 1990, p. 22) through alienation effect. In short, epic theatre is a re-visioning of theatre as a vehicle for social and political change, moving away from a theatre for individual morality or emotional purgation (as in Aristotelian theatre); alienation effect is the use of theatrical devices within the performance reminding audience members of the artificiality of the performance and encouraging them to engage critically.

My point by providing these details is to acknowledge that there is no ‘natural,’ obvious or consistent aesthetic framework and as such there holds the potential to shift it, or move between aesthetic distance and aesthetic closeness, through what artist-researchers create as part of the performance. This notion of the aesthetic framework, whether consciously aware of it or
not, enables audience members “to believe and not to believe at one and the same time” (Jackson, 2007, p. 204) in that they may become engrossed in the action on stage and yet simultaneously understand that the performance is a fiction. In this way, audience members come to engage in an aesthetic encounter in different ways with the performance depending on what is happening on stage.

Audience members are understood to be reciprocal partners of the performance experience where they are drawn into the creative, aesthetic relationship as active participants (Jackson, 2007, p. 178). The role of the audience member is essential “in making the theatre experience the unique event it always is” (Jackson, 2007, p. 180). Ultimately, it is the audience that “activates the theatre event, and in various ways participates in the making of meanings at both individual and collective levels” (Jackson, 2007, p. 180).

It is because audience members are assumed to be active participants, and it is understood that a great deal is not known about them during the creative process, that a certain amount of openness or space is left as the performance is created. This space, what applied theatre scholar Anthony Jackson (2007) terms ‘creative gaps,’ allows audience members to find their own way into the journey and ideas of the play. Jackson advocates for the importance of building these gaps into the educational theatre piece and discusses how, if the educational message is too obvious or predictable and the creative gaps are filled, the work becomes too directed and even didactic. Rather than representing research findings to audience members as distilled concepts, but instead by leading them through the journey of the play, the play’s end can “reveal the folly of the hero’s (and so the audience’s) assumptions about the world and himself” (Mamet, 2010, p. 23). The pedagogical potential lies in the relational aspect of the creative gap, where space is provided through the structure and journey of the play for audience members to see themselves reflected, resonate with the emotional and critical ideas put forward, and offer new possibilities for consideration.

In the theatre creation, embodied research and applied/educational theatre literature, the assumption that the body is deeply implicated within the inventive or creative process is underdeveloped. There are few specific discussions about how the body is implicated, and how artists draw on their embodiment by engaging their imaginations when attempting to understand the research findings (including the experiences of research participants). For example, while Jackson acknowledges that the presence of audience members is implicated in the performance event itself, he does not sufficiently acknowledge the critical role of the imagined bodies of
intended audience members in the creation of research-informed theatre projects. As another example, in returning to Pelias’ important language around the different bodies performers engage with through theatre creation (the knowing, empathic, participatory, political), he offers very little in terms of how the performer recognizes points of view other than her own. Additionally, little is offered about how the performer engages with the actions of other people, including research participants, or acknowledges and engages one’s own political embodied position, let alone how one accomplishes this work without overtaking the experience of others. I would extend Pelias’ work by asking: How does the body of the artist “tak[e] on others” and be “open to others” (Pelias, 2008, p. 187)?

The acceptance that the imagination is drawn upon in the creative process is so implicit in this literature that the notion of imagination is rarely discussed. I intend to add to this scholarship in theatre creation, embodied research and applied/educational theatre by asking: how is it that we engage our imaginations in research-informed theatre practices? If we are to cross disciplinary boundaries between social and health sciences and artistic practices, it behooves us to explore how we draw on our own embodiment as artist-researchers, implicating our imagination, in balance with those of other people, including research participants and intended audience members.

**Summary**

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the ways that theatre and performance are approached from several disciplines and paradigmatic perspectives. I argued that those taking up an aesthetic of objectivity, who value the pursuit of the ‘real’ grounded in text and linearity, are overlooking the problematic nature of this approach. Namely that the attempt to present a concrete ‘truth’ through performance discourages curiosity and dialogue from audience members about what is being presented. I additionally explore the important work taking place interpretively, critically and aesthetically within health and social sciences, as well as theatre and performance studies, particularly in the area of ‘embodied research.’ I applaud these scholars and practitioners for embracing interpretation and their recognition that it is through aesthetic means that research resonates with audience members leading to potential change. In the social and health sciences, however, the ways that embodiment, the physical body and imagination are implicated in the creative process of research-informed theatre tend to be overlooked. In performance and theatre studies, while it is regularly acknowledged that the body is implicated in the performance process, these ideas are also underdeveloped. Additionally, there are few
discussions about the specific ways that imagination is implicated in the process, as well as the links between embodiment and imagination. There is also very little attention across disciplines and paradigms to the specific ways that a multiplicity of people engage in theatrical exploration reciprocally and relationally. Those in theatre and performance studies recognize the significance of relationality in performance beyond what takes place only between performance and audience member to include a multiplicity of people, things, within space and time; however, these practitioners and scholars have yet to discuss the specific ways that artist-researchers engage and explore relationally as a process of scholarly inquiry. What is left unanswered is the ways that artist-researchers implicate themselves and attend to other people without self-erasure through the artistic process of creating research-informed theatre. Prior to moving to this in-depth exploration of the specific ways artist-researchers engage in their practice, in the next chapter I will provide details about three theoretical concepts that inform my analysis: embodiment, imagination and foolishness.
3. **Theoretical frame: embodiment, imagination and foolishness**

In this chapter, I will explicate three theoretical concepts that inform my analysis: *embodiment, imagination* and *foolishness*. These concepts will be drawn upon to articulate the ways that artist-researchers engage their bodies as imaginative, foolish spaces for attending and action in the creative process of research-informed theatre.

**Embodiment: bodily and social/cultural/historical spaces**

My interest in embodiment is rooted in the need to explore the relationship between bodies and spaces in order to more fully understand the ways that artist-researchers engage in investigative, creative work. As such I draw heavily on phenomenology as it emphasizes the experience of inhabiting a body. Of particular interest to me is the work of cultural theorist and queer and feminist phenomenologist Sara Ahmed (2006a, 2006b), and her interests in “how bodies become oriented by how they take up time and space” (2006b, p. 5). Ahmed’s work builds on the work of generations of feminist thinkers who have written about “the “points” at which we stand” as a starting place for existence and exploration (2006b, p. 5). The body, as a starting point, is situated or oriented within social/cultural/historical spaces.

To begin thinking about the physical body as a starting place for the artist-researcher’s exploratory work, I turn to the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010 [1962]). Merleau-Ponty maintains that the body is not an object as a fixed entity separate from *me and my mind*; rather the body has agency and intentionality and is what is experienced in the moment. “I cannot understand the function of the living body except by enacting it myself, and except in so far as I am a body which rises towards the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962], p. 87). Our bodies are how we come to be in and become conscious of the world, and having a body (or being a body) is “to be intervolved in a definite environment” (p. 94). “My body is the pivot of the world: I know that objects have several facets because I could make a tour of inspection of them, and in that sense I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body” (pp. 94-95).

Our previous personal experiences and what has come before us, our history which forms our memories, never leaves us and is “hidden behind our gaze” (Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962], p. 96). A particular event in our lives is not “a representation in the mode of objective consciousness” (p. 96); rather the experiences become a kind of abstraction that exists layered within other experiences. Our bodies then, instead of being objective functional vehicles which
enact the will of our minds, retain these layers of experiences as “an integrated and strictly unique totality” (p. 96). There is a kind of infusion of the biological into personal experience. We can never really escape any part of our past experiences, as our bodies “nourish” these moments (p. 98) and inform how we engage with the present moment and look to the future. Drawing separations between body and mind/soul is futile. The unification of these, as Merleau-Ponty states, “is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence” (p. 102).

While Merleau-Ponty’s writings are an important foundation for understanding the body’s relationship with the physical world, feminist and queer philosophers have critiqued classic phenomenology including Merleau-Ponty as “universaliz[ing] from a specific [male, white, heteronormative] bodily dwelling” (Ahmed, 2006b) These philosophers and theorists “have shown us how social differences are effects of how bodies inhabit spaces with others and have emphasized the intercorporeal aspects of bodily dwelling” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 544). We “start” from our own body, and “turn” or take a particular direction which enables us to find our way by situating ourselves in relation to social/cultural/historical spaces: as artist-researchers, we consider the “oriented-ness” of our embodied starting point throughout our investigations.

As an example, in her seminal feminist work “Throwing like a girl”, Iris Marion Young (1980) critiques Erwin Straus’ study of “the remarkable difference in the manner of throwing of the two sexes” (Straus, 1966, p. 157, cited in Young). She critiques Straus’ biologically-based approach of how a girl at age 5 in comparison with a boy of the same age “does not make any use of lateral space [when throwing a ball]… does not stretch her arm sideward; she does not twist her trunk; she does not move her legs, which remain side by side” (Straus, 1966, p. 157, cited in Young). Young argues that Straus’ explanation of these differences as a girl’s “feminine essence” is not sufficient (Young, 1980, p. 138). A girl or women’s body, given a particular social/cultural situation within a particular historical epoch, will be influenced by those circumstances, and as such, that body’s movement and orientation, and ultimately existence, will be conducted and experienced in relation to this. While acknowledging that not all women’s experiences are the same, nor of course do we all throw the same way, informed by a plethora of social/cultural/historical circumstances, she discusses how a woman’s experience and situation is “conditioned by [her] sexist oppression in contemporary society” (Young, 1980, p. 152). A “woman lives her body as object as well as subject”, meaning the woman’s body is “shape and
flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations, rather than living manifestation of action and intention” (Young, 1980, pp. 153-154, emphasis in original). This objectified bodily existence, as experiencing your body in part from the outside as an object separate from yourself, accounts in great part for the restricted, self-conscious nature of a girl’s movement, stance, and posture while throwing a ball, rather than a more free or open extension taken up by men and boys.

To be oriented in social/cultural/historical space is also to extend the reach of the body. “The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the “here” of the body” and the “where” of its dwelling” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 8). There is an important interrelationship between the body, affected and shaped by its surroundings, and spaces as not exterior to bodies but “like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 9); bodies and spaces impress upon and shape each other. This bodily extending takes place through emotions and senses, and perpetuates a fluidity or slipperiness of our existence; it is through our emotions and senses that we continue to become ourselves, and it is through these means that artist-researchers engage in exploratory work. Ahmed critiques the presumption that emotions are purely internal and private to be expressed outward (as in psychology) and builds on the work of sociologists and anthropologists who argue that emotions are social and cultural practices that influence individuals. She argues that “emotions are not ‘in’ either the individual or the social” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 10) but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow both the individual and the social to be perceived as if they were separate rather than mutually impressionable and intertwined. Ultimately, emotions are relational and they involve “(re)actions” or orientations to things that are in contact (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8).

Ahmed gives the example of a child and a bear. Seeing a bear, a child becomes afraid and runs away. In psychology, it might be argued that such fear has a function to protect the child and that the associated bodily symptoms (racing pulse, rapid breathing) are automatic. But Ahmed argues that the bear is not fearful on its own – it is fearsome to someone. “Fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but is a matter of how the bear and the child come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome” (2004, p. 7, emphasis added). In this way, emotions are not biological, as fixed or universal, but sensory, as transmitted or perceived by the physical body, and “shaped by contact with objects, rather than being caused by objects” (2004, p. 6).
Manning also stresses how “the senses emerge as slippery concepts that complicate the pre-imposed discreteness of the body” (Manning, 2007, p. xiv). Focusing specifically on touch—which she articulates as the act of reaching toward—Manning refutes touch as a stable concept. Alongside and intermingled with emotions, bodies respond to one another, things and spaces through senses, and it is through senses that bodies move in and out of each other (and things and spaces). Bodies individuate, or become themselves, through sensing in collective environments (p. xviii). Sensing bodies are never static, in that they are always becoming and filled with potentiality. In extending this understanding of emotions and senses to the investigative work of artist-researchers this “relational stance… makes it impossible to pin down knowledge” as concrete or objective (p. xvi). Rather, relational, sensing, emotional bodies create in excess of themselves, with other people, things, in space and time.

To draw together the idea of the relationship between the emotional, sensing body, and social/cultural/historical spaces, and what that means for the work of the artist-researcher, Ahmed’s (2006a) notion of “bodily horizon” is useful, which she discusses as a space for action in that it allows the body to extend out into the world (2006a, p. 562). Repetition of bodily action over time produces this bodily horizon where things seem normalized or “straight” when they are aligned with other lines or bodies (see also Csordas, 1990; Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962]). Our orientation within the world involves points of alignment to allow for the extension into the world to happen. Ahmed discusses how, when bodies and their actions in space come out of line, these “queer or wonky moments” are disruptions of the normative and offer insight (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 562). Normative practices attempt to straighten and re-read the queer/wonky. As an example, Ahmed refers to how her neighbour questioned her on her relationship with her partner, asking “Is that your sister, or your husband?” To straighten the relationship of two women living together, the neighbour’s question attempts to first align them as sisters (as alike), or that the one partner is husband as male, legitimate sexual other. Either way, the question attempts to re-read, or straighten, the queer/wonky form of the lesbian couple, which subsequently disappears. I draw on Ahmed’s example to highlight the significance of these “queer or wonky moments” that disrupt the straight or normative line. Through creative work, the artist-researcher must engage in a kind of “embodied reflexivity” by attending to her own bodily horizon that might disappear in her everyday life as she extends into the world along points of alignment, as well as “queer or wonky moments” that disrupt this line.
In discussing non-straight sexual desire, Ahmed, who “left the “world” of heterosexuality, and became a lesbian” (2006b, p. 19), discusses how “to move one’s sexual orientation from straight to lesbian… requires re-inhabiting one’s body, given that one’s body no longer extends the space or even skin of the social” (2006a, p. 563, emphasis added). What we do, our actions (for example a woman desiring a woman, or moving one’s sexual orientation from straight to lesbian), in turn affects what we can do, where we can go, how we are perceived, etc., and requires attending to one’s own bodily horizon in order to re-inhabit it differently. “This is not to say that in moving one’s sexual orientation means that we transcend, or break with, our histories: it is to say that a shift in sexual orientation is not livable simply as a continuation of a line, as such orientations affect other things that bodies do” (2006a, pp. 563-564). As a repeated act often in the face of hostility, lesbian desire can be rethought as a bodily horizon, as a space for action, in that it is an active way to extend into space differently. The re-orienting, or re-inhabiting, is a kind of “coming-to,” of arriving near other bodies, as a “contact that makes a story and opens up other ways of facing the world” (2006a, p. 564). Ahmed’s re-orienting or re-inhabiting fits in with the kind of disruptive work that artist-researchers engage in, as they extend their own bodily horizon towards and imagine into the experiences of others, and ultimately extend into space differently through creative work.

“The spaces we occupy are fleeting” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 565) in that there is a fluidity in how we occupy social or bodily/physical spaces. Through the work of the artist-researcher there is not an attempt “to search for permanence, but to listen to the sound of the “what” that fleets,” such as the moment when Ahmed’s neighbour questioned her relationship with her partner (2006a, p. 565). This “what” or “queer/wonky moment” is the point of disorientation and is the point at which one’s bodily horizon becomes apparent, no longer disappearing. My intention here is to draw on Ahmed’s work on attending to queer/wonky or disruptive moments as a way to understand the creative work of the artist-researcher as disruptive; we disrupt our own bodily horizon, we extend into space differently, as we re-orient ourselves towards the experiences of other people and imagine our way into re-enacting those experiences in the research-informed play.

**Imagination: extending beyond experience**

In addition to emotions and senses, the imagination also allows us to reach out into the world. This imaginative reaching out is both a way to continue to become ourselves and extend beyond our immediate experiences to relate to the experiences of others. This relational function
of the imagination is important as the process of imagining beyond ourselves towards the experiences of other people also offers insight into our own being and existence (Greene, 2001, pp. 118-119). Given phenomenology’s limited attention to notions of imagination, I turn to scholars and theorists who attend to imagination as stemming from embodiment; specifically from aesthetic and arts education (Greene, 2001; Robinson, 2009, 2011), aesthetic philosophy (Manning & Massumi, 2014) and critical scholars from health (Hamington, 2004; Kontos & Naglie, 2007). Imagination is centred in our own pre-reflective, embodied experiences of the world, and can be understood as extending our experience and ideas beyond what is immediately present to our senses by, in part, drawing on our previous embodied experience as a starting point to relate. Aesthetic education philosopher Maxine Greene (2001) discusses the importance of imaginative “wide-awakeness” as a kind of open awareness, reflection and attention, moving to see possibilities beyond the current situation (p. 11). In other words, one might start in Pelias’ “knowing body,” and what she knows in her body from experience, and move towards an “empathic body,” where one recognizes points of view other than her own, through the imagination. Imagination can be understood as an embodied human capacity that allows us to engage with the world and understand pleasure, joy, pain and meaning.

Despite arguments that there will always be aspects of the participants’ experiences we do not know and can never know no matter how much research we conduct (Mienczakowski, 2009), there are also always aspects of other people that we will have insight into because of similar or related embodied experiences and our imaginations (Hamington, 2004; Kontos & Naglie, 2007; Manning & Massumi, 2014; Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962]). As Hamington points out, he has never been sexually abused, but “when confronted with someone who is telling [him] of his or her story of abuse, [his] imagination calls on the bodily resources [he does] have to give [him] a glimmer of understanding” (2004, p. 74). And while Hammington is specifically linking these notions of imagination with caring, that this encounter may contribute to an empathetic linkage leading to caring habits, I draw on this example to highlight how artist-researchers imaginatively extend themselves to relate to experiences of other people rooted in their own embodied “starting point.”

This recognition of the experiences of other people through the imagination should not be understood as an overtaking of their experiences, but rather as a way to see possibilities that would otherwise remain closed, and develop links between what is known to me (as artist-researcher) and what is outside of my sphere of experience, leading to the opportunity for
reflection (Hamington, 2004, pp. 5 - 6). Given its expansive nature, imagination has the potential to be disorienting, unsettling and provocative and can push us to extend our boundaries of experience. Through this imaginative attending to experiences or ideas beyond themselves, the potential opens up for artist-researchers to gain insight into their own past experiences and current situation. There is a reciprocal relationship between extending out to understand experiences beyond one’s own, and insight into one’s own embodiment.

If imagination is to be considered expansive, then pain might be understood as constrictive, in that it reduces a person “to the boundary of her or his own body so that the beyond world is lost” (Thompson, 2011, p. 146). If we turn to an example of physical pain, being cut for example, in that moment of pain, the incident overrides the outside world as it occupies one’s body. While the moment of pain might have few to no words (but perhaps a scream), once the pain dies down, it either “stay[s] with the individual or lead[s] to an urgent need to communicate the experience” (Thompson, 2011, p. 147). My point here is that pain, whether physical as in the example above or personal or emotional trauma, often has a lack of referent and might be difficult to measure and, as such, can be difficult to express. Physical pain specifically is also not commonly associated with notions of imagination as it is immediate and obvious, located within the body of the recipient. However, as the person in pain expresses that pain through language or gesturally, in moving to realms outside the body, the recipient of that expression engages her imagination in the process of relating to the experience. Similar embodied experience, as physical, emotional and sensory, informs the imagination and fosters understanding. In this way too, while the sensation of the cut is what separates us, for you have been cut and I have not, it is also what connects us, by engaging my imagination and recalling when I was also cut I connect to your experience. Imagination, as an extension of embodiment, is not isolated within the individual, but is relational and responsive to other people, things and spaces.

By engaging our imagination we can “play on what we have perceived [through our bodies, emotions, senses]… incarnate it and make it ours” (Greene, 2001, p. 11). We become aware, we notice, we can attend and engage. It is through imagination that the object of engagement, let’s say the experience of the research participant, “may infuse our consciousness, bring new and unexpected patternings into our reflected-on experience, offer us new vantage points on the world” (Greene, 2001, p. 11).
Foolishness: vulnerably and bravely risking ridiculousness

The concepts of embodiment and imagination provide critical insight to conceptualize the ways artist-researchers disrupt bodily and social spaces and imaginatively extending towards experiences of other people. However these concepts do not take into account the ways that artist-researchers do these things vulnerably and bravely, risking failure and ridiculousness. As such, I draw on the theoretical notion of foolishness to help capture this dimension of the work of artist-researchers. The failure of the artist-researcher is vital to her success – this “success” is not understood as a final marker, but happens in flux and in relation to others. When an artist-researcher extends towards something through particular gestures or actions as a way to experiment, when she speaks words, moves in a particular way, writes a scene, she must risk being wrong, or foolish, in her attempts. To be clear, the word foolish here refers not to lacking judgement or being unwise; rather I refer to Fool in the theatrical sense, as vulnerable, brave, disruptive, risking failure and ridiculousness. Foolishness also links with notions of queerness; here I have found Jack Halberstam’s scholarship (2011) to be particularly useful around how we might re-think notions of failure as productive ways to critique commercialized or neo-liberal versions of success.

Performance and theatre practitioners and scholars have argued that failure is an integral part of performance-making (Bailes, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Tannahill, 2015); indeed it is renowned Irish playwright Samuel Beckett who famously invited theatre artists and all of humanity to “fail better” (Beckett, 1983). Performance artist and scholar Sara Jane Bailes (2011) discusses how “failure is intrinsically bound up with artistic production, and by extension, the figure of the artist” (p. 1).

Failure is not a neat concept, and in discussing failure it is difficult to avoid discussing its counterpart success. Conservative approaches to success and failure lead to binary understandings of normative ambitions linked to happiness, productivity and conformity on the one hand versus messiness, undisciplined-ness and embarrassment on the other. Bailes suggests that failure is a kind of work that “seeks to redefine and loosen the boundaries that determine lived experience and representations” (2011, p. 2). For Halberstam, failure is equated with “losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing” (2011, p. 2) and that this failure holds the potential to “offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (pp. 2-3). Failure allows us to critique the normative, orderly and predictable that are associated with notions of success. “And while failure certainly comes
accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (p. 3). Failure holds the potential to expose precarious models of success within dominant models of doing and being that interested only in certain kinds of winners.

Failure pushes back against being ‘serious,’ as too much ‘serious’ ‘means missing out on the chance to be frivolous, promiscuous, and irrelevant’ (p. 6). “The desire to be taken seriously is precisely what compels people to follow the tried and true path of knowledge production” (p. 6). Halberstam insists that “serious and rigorous tend to be code words, in academia as well as other contexts, for disciplinary correctness; they signal a form of training and learning that confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing, but they do not allow for visionary insights or flights of fancy” (p. 6, emphasis in original). Halberstam stresses the importance of losing one’s way, and that losing can lead you in unexpected directions. Failure and losing can help us re-think “the project of learning and thinking altogether” (p. 7), thereby also re-thinking the notion of success. When approaching the experiences of other people, artist-researchers embrace foolishness as “…unmaking, undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing” with their bodily horizon and imagination.

Foolishness then, like imagination, opens up options that are unknown; in this way, foolishness and failure are productive.

It is helpful here to connect these notions of failure, losing, embarrassment, undoing and not knowing with the theatrical character of The Fool, particularly in Elizabethan England. The Fool disrupts traditional thought and social space through his playful actions which has implications for how we might think of the way that artist-researchers engage in creative work. The Fool’s theatrical and social role has shifted culturally and within particular historical epochs, but a general thread links these roles as one who provokes or supports by playing. The Court Fool in “real life” (as opposed to the Theatrical Fool on stage), while he (and I say ‘he’ as the role was usually fulfilled by a man) was a servant whose purpose was to entertain through various means such as singing ballads, dancing and tumbling thereby provoking laughter for the court, had a unique freedom to comment upon his master’s conduct without inviting punishment. It should be noted that the Court Fool was “something more than a humorous entertainer” (Goldsmith, 1974, p. 7). As Theatre Historian Robert Hillis Goldsmith points out:

“He was also the licensed critic of his master and his fellows. Since he was not held accountable for what his tongue wagged, the fool might clatter or speak unwelcome truths with comparative impunity. When he was whipped, as he occasionally was when
he carried his impudence too far, he was chastised as a naughty child might be” (1974, p. 7).

In a position of subjugation, the Fool was considered to be simultaneously unwise and a seer. While he held a certain freedom to critique and speak openly because of this ambiguous position, he was always at risk of serious corporeal punishment if his words and actions were taken too far. There is a blurring of the role of entertainer and critic, which was always precarious. Understood as “a truthful person,” the Fool might “hide his wits under a fool’s cap and bells, [and] he did so in order that he might speak the truth more freely and more fearlessly” (p. 11). The Fool might critique his master, but do it “behind the cloak of assumed inferiority” (p. 48).

In turning to the Theatrical Fool of Shakespeare’s playhouse, it should be noted that, of course, Shakespeare did not invent the Theatrical Fool; he created several Fool characters within his plays emerging out of social and theatrical traditions throughout Europe. While not a prominent role, The Fool’s presence alters the tone and meaning of the play; he regularly stands aside from and comments on the main stage action, addressing audience members directly, breaking the fourth wall (a theatrical technique called direct address). It should be noted that there was also a fluidity between the terms Fool and Clown (Goldsmith, 1974; Wiles, 2005 [1987]). For example, in his First Folio, Shakespeare used the term Clown to denote Touchstone (As You Like It), Feste (Twelfth Night), and Lavatch (All’s Well that Ends Well) within stage directions, but then both terms Fool and Clown in dialogue. Additionally, in his book Fool Upon Fool, actor Robert Armin of Chamberlain’s Men, as the performers of Shakespeare’s plays, used both terms Fool and Clown in describing his work (Wiles, 2005 [1987], p. 66).

Theatre Historian David Wiles (2005 [1987]) discusses how the Clown/Fool’s role within Shakespeare’s work, as always of servant status, was to generate new and contradictory pictures of social order. Like the Court Fool, the Theatrical Clown/Fool enjoys unique freedom within the plays to speak freely and critique those of higher social status, as Lear’s Fool often does within King Lear for example. Critiquing positivist historians who dismissed the Clown/Fool’s bodily and sexual humour, verging on obscene, as well as his inattentiveness to the structures of verse, as ‘low/popular” and therefore “lesser,” Wiles suggests that through these means the Clown/Fool disrupted Elizabethan thought and social organization around gentility; it was through the Clown/Fool that debates about power could take place (p. 174). Building on the theatrical and social roles of the Clown/Fool, artist-researchers engage in the creation of
research-informed theatre disruptively and playfully, and also hold the potential to disruptively and playfully engage in social critique more broadly.

For theatre educator and practitioner Jacques LeCoq (2001), contemporary clowns exist to make us laugh by embracing failure, weakness and the ridiculous (pp. 143-144). Through clown training, theatre artists aim to be less defensive, exposing naïveté and fragility. It is this vulnerability, this willingness to fail and play as a responsive way to be in relation to other people, and to disrupt and provoke bodily and social spaces throughout the investigative, creative process for research-informed theatre that I will continue to highlight throughout this section. Artist-researchers foolishly engage in investigation, vulnerably allowing themselves to fail or be wrong in order to explore or gesture differently from their own way of being in the world.

I return to Ahmed’s notion of the bodily horizon as a space for action and how “wonky moments” can provide insight into normative social/cultural/historical spaces as well as personal/embodied experience with the potential to disrupt them. The artist-researcher attends to or seeks out the wonky with “wide-awareness,” or with open attention, as a way to extend beyond herself (Greene, 2001); “To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 565). The artist-researcher must “attend differently” (Greene, 2001, p. 69) to her own bodily horizon and the bodily horizon of research participants through her imagination. She does this in order to do beyond her own experience, or to disrupt her own bodily horizon by extending into space differently through enacted gestures (for example, through her movement or spoken words).

However, at the junction of these concepts it is important to ask: how is it that the artist-researcher disrupts her own bodily horizon by imaginatively extending into space differently without overtaking the experience of research participants? Within critical and interpretive research paradigms there have been significant discussions about the crisis of representation and colonization of the experiences of research participants (see for example Behar, 1996; Behar & Gordon, 1995; Clifford, 1986; Kondo, 1995; Rossiter, 2012). This work of the artist-researcher is not immune to these discussions and considerations; indeed Tami Spry (2006) articulated that this crisis of representation was “not so much a crisis for performance studies artists/scholars but a recognition of a familiar [discussion]” (p. 339). It is here that the artist-researcher enters into these complexities of engagement and representation foolishly; bravely, vulnerably, experimentally with a willingness to be wrong and try anyway. The artist-researcher plays, in that through her investigative work she vulnerably produces an enhanced ‘being-in-the-world’
(Thrift, 2007, p. 74) and responsively and relationally experiments with ideas and actions with other people (Thrift, 2007, p. 7). Through the imaginative engagement of her own bodily horizon, artist-researchers humbly, messily, vulnerably surrender themselves to the experiences of research participants. The messiness, the not-knowing, the undoing in the approach can lead to being wrong or failing, which in turn opens up unexpected directions. In this way, foolishness holds the potential to be productive.

I return to Behar’s discussions about how vulnerability allows you to “enter into the world around you” when you have “no idea how to do it” (1996, p. 3). Behar discusses the importance of vulnerability in entering into a researcher-participant relationship. If researchers are asking those they observe to be vulnerable by looking into their lives, researchers themselves have a responsibility to be vulnerable and implicated in the research process (p. 24). She asks about the kinds of impressions that researchers leave on our participants, and in turn, how impressions are made upon us as researchers by our participants. And she attests that by engaging in research and writing vulnerably we are asking our audiences, as readers, listeners and witnesses, to engage intellectually and emotionally (p. 20).

In turning to research-informed theatre, this vulnerable relationship among original research participants, artist-researchers and future audience members can help us think on how artist-researchers engage in their own creative process. In exploring the lives of research participants, artist-researchers must be attuned to the impressions they can leave on participants, both with the initial research as well as how those lives are then represented to an audience through the performance. Similarly, in creating the performance, artist-researchers will undoubtedly leave impressions upon their audience. Indeed many performance and theatre scholars would argue this is, in great part, one of the main purposes of theatre. If we aim to engage audience members intellectually and emotionally, we need to engage vulnerably and openly throughout the creative process.

Applied theatre scholar Julie Salverson has done important work on the “foolish witness,” situated at the intersection of social justice, trauma and performance (2006, 2008). She warns against the “tragic witness” who indulges in over-simplified analysis of trauma, reducing complexities into the explainable, and making “the tragedy go away” (2006, p. 149). She also discusses the “paralyzed witness” who, stuck in questions such as “who am I, anyway?” and “How could I know?” and afraid to be ridiculed, does nothing to engage with other people in the face of trauma. In response to these, Salverson offers the “foolish witness” as one who enters an
encounter with another person with the attitude of a clown: with bravery, and a willingness to fail and step forward with uncertainty (2008, p. 246). One runs the risk as a “foolish witness” to be accused of “making the story about [one]self” (2008, p. 249), by not attending to a cautious distance more prized in the academy. However Salverson insists that by being a foolish witness one offers one’s “presence as engagement, not sacrifice or self-erasure.” The “challenge is to be available, and to have a Self to be available with” (2008, p. 249).

In creating research-informed theatre, artist-researchers disrupt their own bodily horizon and social/cultural/historical spaces foolishly, unafraid to be ridiculed with the willingness to fail and step forward with uncertainty. This vulnerable, playful approach allows artist-researchers to engage in experimental, disruptive work when they have “no idea how to do it” (Behar, 1996, p. 3). This foolish approach as messy, as the willingness to become undone or not know holds the potential to be productive as it opens up unpredictable directions. Foolishness additionally critiques learning, thinking, being and doing as neat and linear. This creative work is relational, adaptive and flexible, simultaneously attending to the original experiences of research participants and future audience members without self-erasure. Through creative work, we disrupt bodily and social/cultural/historical spaces, imaginatively extend towards the experiences of other people, allowing “ourselves to fail while remaining always alert, ready and willing to try” (Salverson, 2006, p. 155).

**Summary**

In discussing the three theoretical concepts, *embodiment, imagination* and *foolishness*, I have begun to conceptualize how artist-researchers are implicated within the creative process of research-informed theatre. I frame the exploratory work of artist-researchers as beginning in their “bodily horizon” in relation to social/cultural/historical spaces. Imagination, as informed by embodied experience is also intimately implicated in exploration and allows the artist-researcher to relate to experiences beyond her own as well as offering insight into her own embodiment. The artist-researcher foolishly, as vulnerably and bravely with the willingness to be wrong, attends to personal and social “wonky moments,” understood as fleeting moments when the normative line is disrupted, to better understand her own bodily horizon in relation to others. This attending assists her as she imaginatively extends towards and disrupts bodily and social/cultural/historical spaces through creative work. With a willingness to be wrong and imagine, throughout the creative process of research-informed theatre, the artist-researcher foolishly does differently, or disrupts through her actions including language and words, physical
gestures and movements, use of metaphor, among others. These theoretical concepts, however, are not sufficient to understand the specific ways that artist-researchers support a relational exploration through the creative process of research-informed theatre. As such, I engaged in an empirical study to further understand this process. In the next chapter, I explicate my study methodology and provide details of the specific ways I explored artist-researchers’ creative processes.
4. Research contexts

Despite calls within both educational and health research to attend to aesthetics when engaging with and discussing arts-based research broadly, and research-informed theatre specifically, there is little attention to how we, as artist-researchers, discuss our own creative process of research-informed theatre. As such, I have designed a research project that takes seriously the role of the artist-researcher within the process of research-informed theatre as a source for better understanding this process. I took an approach to knowledge production that allowed for an in-depth exploration of artist-researchers own words to describe our own process, and attended to the embodied, imaginative and experimental nature of the process without fixing or firmly defining the process as a finite method. In this chapter I explicate my phenomenologically-informed interpretive case study methodology. This will include background information on the research-informed play *Cracked: new light on dementia* as my case, data collection strategies, and details about the ways I analysed my data. Finally I provide detailed descriptions of each of my participants, including the situation of myself as both researcher and co-participant.

**An interpretive approach**

Given my interest in avoiding prescriptive imperatives for research-informed theatre, working within an interpretive paradigm was most appropriate for my study. The aim of taking an interpretive approach is not to claim an ultimate truth, but rather to see things anew, to explore what is unsaid as much as what is said, and to approach the research process as an experience rather than as a neutral activity. My intention is not to directly capture the experience of creating research-informed theatre; rather my analysis suggests a meaning of active and in-motion experiences and is a temporary representation of those experiences (Denzin, 1997, p. 5). At its core, interpretation is a creative approach that overturns assumptions without necessarily seeking a clear, linear narrative, and requires the bringing to language of something new (Moules, 2002). Given my interest in observing how artist-researchers vulnerably draw on their own embodiment and imagination as an active ‘happening’, an interpretive approach can help to bring this into an emergent and observable phenomenon.

Additionally, the role of the inquirer is central to an interpretive approach. The inquirer “must show his colors [sic]” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 388) and is an integral instrument to the gathering of data and the process of interpretation and analysis (see also Denzin, 1997). The
inquirer must also continually re-awaken her own understanding of the meaning of the data and be continually reflexive. An inquirer must embrace her “prejudices” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 273) as the inevitable judgements and projections she makes based on the knowledge and experience accumulated over a lifetime. This is not to be rejected as ‘bias’ that clouds the inquiry, rather it is a productive place to start to ask questions of the phenomenon.

**Case study methodology**

In order to mobilize this interpretive approach I engaged with exploratory single case study methodology, exploring a specific example of my topic as a way to interpret the larger phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 1981, 2009). Case study is a particularly useful methodology when “boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981, p. 59), unlike the experiment, which attempts to remove the phenomenon from its context, or the historical study which explores phenomenon of the past. With an exploratory case study, a particular case is identified, as bounded by particular parameters such as a specific time or place, in order to explore this contemporary phenomenon in context through the in-depth detailed analysis of multiple sources of information without the expectation for clear sets of outcomes (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). As Yin (1994) discusses, case study is most pertinent when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 9). A case study methodology was thus most appropriate to explore the phenomenon of the creative processes of artist-researchers for research-informed theatre as lived experiences. Taking a phenomenological approach to this study allowed me to explore commonalities among the experiences of all of my participants within the case (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

In order to explore the ways we as artist-researchers engage our embodiment and imagination as part of our creative, investigative practice, it made sense to explore this phenomenon within the boundaries of a current research-informed theatre project. As such I chose *Cracked: new light on dementia* as the subject of my inquiry, of which I am the playwright and director. I partly chose my own work as my case because I entered this study with a great deal of knowledge: of the craft and technique of creating theatre, of collaborating with health and social scientists, of the artistic experience of creating *Cracked* specifically, and of the data that informed the development of the play. This knowledge was a productive place to start to ask questions of the phenomenon about how artist-researchers actively attend to and engage their bodies as imaginative spaces in the process of creative work. Case studies often draw on
“propositions,” or suggestions towards what the inquirer might find through the study. These propositions help place limits on the scope of the study, can help focus data collection and inform the study’s conceptual framework (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this way, my experience in research-informed theatre more broadly as well as my direct involvement in the creative process for Cracked, served as an excellent foundation to propose that artist-researchers draw on their embodiment and imagination throughout creating research-informed theatre. Additionally at the time of collecting my data (Spring/Summer 2014), I had just completed a significant portion of the creative work in developing Cracked, and was about to embark on performances in long term care facilities, conferences and for the general public. This made for good timing in approaching participants for interviews, namely the actors of Cracked, as the experience of the play was fresh in their minds.

Cracked’ - background

The development of Cracked, which began in spring of 2011, was informed by research conducted by Drs. Sherry Dupuis, Gail Mitchell, Pia Kontos, and Christine Jonas-Simpson, all of whom are health researchers who specialize in the areas of aging, dementia, and research-informed performance (live theatre and/or film). These researchers were looking for a way to challenge the discourse of tragedy and loss that is dominant in relation to dementia and the people who live with it, and the corresponding dehumanizing care practices that are prevalent in so many institutional care settings. The play was developed collaboratively with a group of actors, some of whom became participants in my study, and it forefronts the centrality of relationships and humanity when providing care for persons with dementia, and the need to recognize the dynamic ways that memory and self-expression occur through embodiment. From a theatre perspective, this collaborative play making is called theatrical devising, and involves a collaborative, improvised creative process among artist-researchers (Barton & Wells, 2008; Filewod, 1987; Mitchell, 2009). Theatrical devising differs from a more traditional theatrical creative process where the playwright develops the script in isolation, bringing drafts of the script to the studio to be workshopped “on its feet,” to gain a clearer understanding of how the script works with the voices and bodies of performers within time and space.

The health researchers and I met for one year, from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012, to discuss their dementia research that critiques dominant, tragic assumptions about dementia, and to conceptualize how these themes might inform the research-informed play. In December 2011, focus groups were conducted with persons with dementia and family members where they were
asked what it was that made life worth living. These focus groups were conducted to inform the development of the play; transcripts were analyzed by the health research team and emergent themes informed our continuing team discussions. In March 2012 we recruited 7 actors and began our time as a full ensemble of health researchers and artists in May 2012. Transcripts from the December 2011 focus groups were also used as part of our creative development process, where the artist-researchers alongside health researchers read and discussed the transcripts, and also used the transcripts as a beginning point for theatrical improvisation and writing the play. In November 2012, the actors and I visited a long term care home and interacted with residents living with dementia and the home’s staff. In November 2012, we additionally held an Arts Workshop where a group of people with dementia, their family members, the health research team and the actors were gathered together with a group of visual artists. The purpose of this full-day Arts Workshop was to ask people with dementia about their experiences of living with dementia and what they wanted the world to know about their experiences, and to collaborate with the visual artists and actors to create images that expressed these ideas. The day culminated by sharing 8 visual expressions created with each other. These two experiences, of visiting a long term care home and the Arts Workshop, gave me and the actors first-hand experience as an ensemble engaging with persons living with dementia and complemented the focus group data.

Creative development workshops took place in June 2012 (10 days), September 2012 (10 days), April 2013 (3 days), June 2013 (10 days) and November 2013 (10 days). There were works-in-progress presentations in September 2012, June 2013 and November 2013 to an audience of invited key stakeholders from the dementia community and beyond, including health care providers, educators, family members, people with dementia and the general public.

Early creative development phases involved my working with the actors and health researchers by engaging in ‘Rounds,’ an exercise brought forward by theatre creator/performer Mary Ellen MacLean, which involved engaging in highly physical and improvisational exploration of the material (I provide a detailed description of Rounds in Chapter 5). This improvisational work, in response to the research findings, allowed us to understand the research findings through our bodies, senses, imagination and within time and space, and to generate theatrical, imagistic material that informed the script. Throughout this time in-studio, I took copious hand-written creative notes about what I was seeing; we additionally videotaped part of our improvisational work. Part of my hand-written creative notes documented, through words
and drawings, physical gestures of the actors, as well as some analysis about what I was seeing that related to discussions about our critique of the tragedy discourse. In between creative development phases, I started to organize the creative material generated and pull out particular compelling images and ideas. From there I would write early incarnations of particular scenes or develop particular characters by writing, for example, a monologue in that character’s voice. Additionally, I would draw images and ideas on cue-cards based on our improvisations so I could re-arrange them visually. This documented material was then brought back to the studio for the next creative development phase and the team would work from this material. As the creative phases progressed, the health researchers slowly withdrew from the improvisational/performed work and offered research and dramaturgical support to me as I refined the script. The improvisational work was also reduced as the script began to take further shape (for a copy of the script, please see Collective Disruption, In Press). We also videotaped some of the scenes we were working on and improvised, in order for me to document the work in script form later. The script ultimately was a written documentation of what we were doing physically in-studio.

*Cracked* follows two story-lines: of Elaine Carter and Vera Nolan, both of whom have been diagnosed with dementia. The play opens with Elaine’s diagnosis and follows her journey with her two adult children as they navigate their changing relationships. We see Elaine become engaged with her community, reconnecting with her longtime friend Vera who has also been diagnosed with dementia, engaging politically to improve the lives of persons living with dementia, and flirting with beautiful young men. A space opens in a long term care home and Elaine and her family make the decision to move her into this home. From here the journey shifts as Elaine’s world again opens up to meeting new people and making new friends in the home. Elaine’s daughter Caroline struggles with her own assumptions of what persons living with dementia should be like; by the play’s end she is able to spontaneously dance with her mother. With Vera, we also witness her journey with her husband Tom as they work through changes in their relationship. There comes a point when Tom is no longer able to care for Vera, and she also moves into a long term care home. As the play moves to the end, and as Vera progresses further on her dementia journey, we learn about Vera’s history and life experiences through her sensuous and embodied memories of dancing, singing, joy and fear. Through both story lines, the audience sees both characters living with dementia grow and learn not only despite the disease, but because of it.
Cracked has simple production values and was built to tour to non-traditional theatre spaces, such as community centres, hospitals and conferences. The set consists of a painted backdrop and six mix-matched chairs; there are no props. Actors mime all props and the space is defined in great part by the way actors move through it or mime into it. Music plays a significant role in the play; song helps to carry much of the action of the play forward. Actors sing a cappella and move and gesture to indicate scene transitions as there is no formal lighting.

Data

My goal in using Cracked as the case for my study was to look at several different textual documents (written, visual and performance) relating to how it is that artist-researchers come to engage their own embodiment and imagination as an integral part of the creation of this research-informed play. I have attempted to capture the experience in multiple ways by drawing on my own process journals, video footage of rehearsals, works-in-progress presentations and performances (including participants bodies and imaginative actions), interviews with actors (which were videotaped, in an attempt to capture participants’ bodies and actions), my hand-written creative notes from our in studio work, and drafts of the script (further documenting my process as a writer and as a written documentation of what was enacted or gestured in studio). It should be noted that during the creative process for Cracked I was not intending to analyse or study the process. Any documentation of the process was done simply as part of the process for reference and reflective purposes. For example, any video footage we took during rehearsal was as a reference for us as a team of artist-researchers so that we might continue to refine particular moments in the play. In this way, documentation of the process through video footage, my hand-written rehearsal journals, or my electronic writing journal (as examples) was done to support the play’s development and was not controlled or geared towards future analysis of the process. Drawing on these documents as data for my case study then provides unmanipulated or uncontrolled insight into the broader process of creating research-informed theatre as well as into the ways artist-researchers’ drew on their embodiment and imagination. It is the exploration of the uncontrolled that is one of case study’s strengths as a methodology.

As my first data set, I used the data related to the creative process of development of Cracked. This included my own notes of the process including my hand-written rehearsal note books, where I documented ideas within rehearsal and the in-studio creative development phases, and my electronic process journal, where I recorded my own process of the creative journey. This electronic journal includes reflections on initial team meetings with the health researchers,
reflections on progress during the in-studio creative development phases, moments where I was struggling as a writer and moments of success in my writing process, and in-studio work and collaborations. Also part of this initial data was the play’s final script (and drafts of the script-in-progress), video footage from rehearsals (September 2012), works-in-progress performance (June 2013), preview performances (November 2013), and fully mounted performances (March 2014, May 2014 and October 2014).

I also collected transcripts of recordings of team meetings that took place between myself and the health researchers in 2011 and 2012. The focus of these meetings, as described above, was the exploration of the dominant tragic representations of dementia that the team wanted to challenge. Additionally, we explored concepts for audiences to consider in terms of how the body is fundamental to self-expression, particularly for those with dementia, and how relationships are not only important for ethical, humanistic care, but are vital. These concepts were grounded in the health researchers’ programs of research and were being brought together to form the thematic foundation for the play’s development. There were six (6) meetings that were recorded and transcribed and I received permission from each of the health researchers to use these data (see Appendix A for Consent form for health researchers and Appendix B for recruitment email). The transcripts of team meetings were useful to me in that they provided examples of how different these discussion-based analysis meetings were in comparison with the more embodied, spatial and temporal work we engaged in once we moved into our creative development phases. In this way, the team meeting transcripts were most useful to me in what they did not provide; while we did sometimes engage our imagination through our discussions, we were not exploring concepts through our bodies, physical gestures and movements, within space and time.

Finally, transcripts of previous interviews with the actors of Cracked were also collected as data for my study. These interviews were conducted after the Arts Workshop with people with dementia, their care partners, visual artists, health researchers and the actors and myself as playwright/director. Interviews were conducted with all of these participants after the Arts Workshop to better understand the process of this day, and how the day impacted each of its participants. As part of the actors’ interviews, they were asked about their experience of developing the play and how the Arts Workshop had influenced their perspectives on dementia. Yet, the transcripts from these interviews focused primarily on the content of the Arts Workshop and experiences of meeting persons living with dementia. There was little opportunity for me to
observe the ways that the actors drew on their embodiment, imagination and actions in the process of developing the play from these transcripts directly.

To broaden my exploration of the creative process of developing *Cracked* to include other artist-researchers besides myself as playwright, I conducted video-taped interviews with four (4) actors. In these interviews, I did not only attend to verbal discourse, or what actors were saying about their process with their words, but also to how their bodies expressed their experience. As such I attended to the ways the actors’ bodies supported or contradicted their words. I was interested in exploring expressions of the body as active forms of analysis and interpretation. Videotaping their interviews allowed for me to look at specific performed moments in multiple ways; for example, if an actor discussed a particular scene in her interview, I was able to look at that performed moment across data sets, including what the actor said about that scene, what she was physically doing (her gestures) in the moment she discussed the scene in the interview, rehearsal footage of that scene, as well as footage from works-in-progress presentations and performances.

*Data analysis*

Once my interviews with actors were complete, I transcribed three of them myself and hired a transcriber to transcribe my final interview (due to time pressures). I printed my interview transcripts along with my electronic process journal to facilitate coding. While my overall goal was to observe the ways that artist-researchers attend to and engage their bodies and imagination, looking at the language used to describe the process seemed an important place to deepen my analysis. In analyzing my printed e-journal, I began to observe the differences between my writing about discussions we were having as a team, such as verbally discussing the tragedy discourse, and my writing about our engagement in theatrical exploration of particular concepts and how we used movement, space, time, our own bodies and each other as part of our exploration. I also turned to the transcripts of my interviews, attending to how the actors discussed what they were doing, their gestures, as well as how they imagined and sensed things as part of their creative work. This initial analysis involved an inductive descriptive process of sorting and defining the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

In turning to the video footage of the interviews as well as of rehearsals and performances, I was able to attend more clearly to how bodies, moving relationally in time and space, were engaged in practice and how this practice was an interpretive and analytic process. I could directly observe how the actors’ changed their posture, gestures and movements when
shifting between characters, and how this physical change provided points of interpretation and analysis through the body. The transcripts of my e-journal and the transcripts of actor interviews provided valuable descriptions of these things, but the video footage allowed me to observe these concepts in practice. I was able to observe, for example, how the actors and I worked together to “time” and “space” a particular scene, to ensure the actors worked relationally with each other to create a cohesive picture and story. Analysis of my hand-written journals of in-studio time gave further insight into particular performed moments we were experimenting with or rehearsing. These multiple sets of data worked together to provide a dynamic understanding of the ways artist-researchers engage their bodies and imagination as forms of analysis and interpretation.

Descriptive codes were then grouped into broad topic-oriented categories related to embodiment, and imagination, and actions (understood as everything the artist-researcher does, including word choice, movement, spacing, timing, use of metaphor, character development, among others). All text and video segments belonging to the same category were compared. Through this process, it became apparent that these three broad categories overlapped significantly and occurred simultaneously in practice. I struggled with how to best discuss these categories given their interconnectedness. As such, in refining these topic-oriented categories, I engaged in an iterative process of going back and forth between the data and my theoretical concepts of embodiment and imagination to articulate this overlapping nature. It was at this point I began to recognize that these concepts were not sufficiently supporting my analysis of what I was seeing in my data. It was at this point that I drew on additional theory from performance and theatre studies, theatre history and queer studies to conceptualize foolishness and inform my analysis of the data.

Throughout this process I kept a research journal where I documented both the steps I was taking as well as my thinking on observations, tensions, ‘aha!’ moments and frustrations. I continued to review my audit trail with my supervisor, Dr. Pia Kontos, to ensure analyses were supported by the data (Schwandt, 2001). Through triangulation of my different data sets (e.g. actor interview transcripts, interview video footage, my e-journal, rehearsal video footage) I was able to build a richer understanding of the phenomenon of how artist-researchers foolishly and imaginatively implicate themselves within the process of creating research-informed theatre (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).
Participants and my role as researcher/co-participant

To place my analysis in context, and explicate more clearly how artist-researchers vulnerably draw on their embodiment and imagination throughout the creative process of research-informed theatre, I describe here the recruitment of my participants, the study participants themselves, and my role as researcher and co-participant.

Seven invitations were extended to actors involved in Cracked. Actors were approached by my research colleague, Dr. Jay Shaw, who initially approached potential participants via email as per the ethics protocol approved by University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C for consent form for actors and Appendix D for email and phone correspondence with actors from myself and Dr. Shaw). It was explained to the actors that their participation in my study would in no way affect their working relationship with me, as their director, and in no way would affect any future employment with Cracked. It was made clear that Dr. Shaw was approaching them in order to give them space to think about their possible participation without any undue pressure from me as their colleague and director. Four actors consented to be interviewed and granted permission for me to use visual/video data in which they appeared, and previous interview transcripts from the Arts Workshop; 2 actors agreed to the inclusion of visual/video data and previous interview transcripts only (no interviews, citing they did not have the time to be interviewed). One actor declined to participate (as she did not respond to Dr. Shaw’s emails).

Interviews explored how, through the experience of developing Cracked, they drew on their own embodiment to understand the research findings (including relating to the experiences of the original research participants), how they engaged their imaginations as part of the process, how they used their bodies and imagination to move their understanding of the research findings into dramatic form, and how they used their bodies and imagination to conceptualize the intended audience as part of the development process (please see Appendix E for interview guide). Questions focused on the concepts of embodiment and imagination as I had not yet conceptualized the notion of foolishness, which emerged after I began my analysis. I conducted the interviews, which were semi-structured and lasted approximately 50-60 minutes; three of the interviews took place in the participant’s home, and one interview took place in my home. After I transcribed the interviews, I shared the individual transcript with the corresponding participant in order that they might continue to reflect on what they had said and raise any concerns about the interview process and/or their own words; they were additionally provided the opportunity to
clarify or remove any segments of the interview they had concerns about. No participant requested segments of their interview be deleted.

Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym and all identifying features or words have been removed from transcripts and my writing. In advance of signing the consent form, participants and I discussed that, as a member of the *Cracked* team, their names were already associated with the project – this increases the chance that their identity could be revealed as part of my study. One participant asked to be identified by her full name; this agreement aligns with my Ethics Protocol as approved by University of Toronto Ethics Board and was documented on her consent form.

In describing my participants and myself as a co-participant below, I attend to our individual embodiment and “bodily horizon” (Ahmed, 2006a, 2006b) as I observed them through video footage of interviews and rehearsal. As such, in my descriptions I have attempted to observe and document visual details about each participant, as ways that the participant extends into the world, as well as the ways he or she moves and acts within space. I write these descriptions of participants’ embodiment in an attempt to draw attention later in the dissertation to how they disrupt their own embodiment throughout the creative process. I additionally take the time here to bring attention to participants’ embodiment to remind the reader of the body’s centrality as part of this study.

*Elise*

Elise is a white woman in her early 40s, born in one of Canada’s prairie provinces. She is very small, both in her height and in her weight. Despite her tiny size, her body is also strong which is apparent in observing her physical stamina in rehearsal. Her light brown hair is straight, cut at the shoulders and wisps around her face and neck if she wears it up. Her eyes are sharp, taking in everything around her, and twinkle with curiosity. Sometimes she bites her lips as she listens to other people, and the corners of her mouth turn up inquisitively. Her back is straight and shoulders rest easily on her spine. Her arms are often crooked at the elbow, as she either delicately draws her fingertips together to play with one of her rings or holds a mug of tea. When she speaks, her fingers dance in front of her body, arms extending easily and fully from her shoulders, and as she pauses from speaking to think her fingers come together, finger tips intermingling, fingers nails gliding over the cuticles of the other hand. Despite her tiny size, her fingers have a long elegance about them. When not gesturing with her hands and arms, Elise tucks her hands under her thighs as she sits. When she sits, her spine is straight and her
shoulders are neatly stacked above her hips, her thighs extend flat against the chair, out from her hips.

*James*

James is a white man in his late 50s, born in central Canada. He has clipped short white/salt-and-pepper hair and wears simple-framed glasses. He is ‘average’ height, and he stands straight. He often speaks quickly, words often overlapping and bumping into each other as they fall out of his mouth. When he speaks, his jaw is relaxed, his lips are soft, his head is animated and glides easily on his neck. His smile is wide as he engages with people, and when questioning, his jaw relaxes and shifts, his eyes narrow and his hands become drawn gesturally into the conversation. As he walks, his assured limbs swing easily, his legs stepping with confidence. While not large, his torso is prominent and he moves into spaces with ease. When conversing, James sits quite still, legs straight out from under him, fingers loosely clasped together, head tilting slightly to the left as he listens.

*Jenny*

Jenny is a white woman who was born in Canada, in her late 30s at the time of the development of *Cracked*. She has tidy straight brown hair, cut in a bob. Her round eyes are bright and open to the world, and she engages with people with curiosity and friendliness. Her broad shoulders rest gently on her straight, strong spine, and her arms swing gently at her side as she walks. Her extensive physical training as a performer is apparent as she moves with fluidity upon entering a room, and gently placing her knapsack onto the floor. Her finger joints are particular and attentive, and anticipate tiny details of her engagement with the world such as tucking her hair behind her ear, or extending behind her backside to help lower and adjust herself into her chair as she sits. She will often touch the outside corners of her mouth with her left hand when she is thinking. When sitting, she relaxes back in her chair, her chest open, with her left foot tucked up on her chair in the crook of her right knee. When she speaks, her hands sometimes gesture and fall open away from her body, wide and relaxed.

*Mary Ellen*

It should be noted that Mary Ellen MacLean is this participant’s real name and not a pseudonym; Mary Ellen requested that her name be used to recognize the work she contributed as a theatre creator to our process. Mary Ellen is a white Canadian-born woman from Nova Scotia (on Canada’s east coast), who at the time of creating *Cracked* was in her late 40s. With
tousled, short, auburn hair, Mary Ellen stands with a straight spine, shoulder blades resting flat against her back and rib cage. She addresses people openly and directly, eyes open, smiling and curious. She walks with confidence, and, despite being quite short in stature, her strides are long and weighted. Her hands are strong and wide, and her arms rest slightly away from her body as an extension of her open chest. When conversing with others, she relaxes back in her chair, with her left foot/leg tucked up on the chair and her right leg flung over her left knee.

Greg
Greg was in his mid-40s at the time of Cracked’s development. He is white and was born and raised on Canada’s west coast. Greg’s stature is very tall, over six feet tall, and he has a physically strong body. As he walks around the rehearsal space his shoulders slouch and his long arms hang to his side. When listening to you, he will either look directly in your eyes with intensity, his head tilted slightly to his left and his mouth fixed intensely, or he holds the same physical intensity but looking to a spot on the ground or on the wall. When he laughs, lines appear around his eyes, his face lights up with his infectious smile, and his body tilts back in a straight line, hands towards his belly.

Alan
Alan is a white Canadian male actor in his early 40s. He stands with erect posture, two feet squarely beneath his hips, but also relaxed shoulders, belly straight ahead, his hands often gently resting to his side. As he waits and listens for someone to speak, his head sometimes rests gently to the right and he will brush his floppy hair out of his eyes without attention.

Julia / me
I am a white Canadian-born woman, and at the time of Cracked’s development I was in my late 30s. I wear my salt-and-pepper hair short, and there are often quirky wisps escaping from its tightness to my head. Distinct glasses frame my narrow face. I have a tall, lean stature, and my long arms and narrow hands move fluidly as an extension of my torso. Despite this fluidity of my limbs, my torso itself is upright and quite still as I glide on my feet and legs when walking in long strides. Additionally, while my spine is straight, my shoulders roll forward when I stand. My weight is planted steadily onto my feet, despite the fluidity of my limbs.

2 I write a description of myself and my physical gestures for two main reasons. First is to remind the reader that I am both the inquirer and a co-participant. Additionally, throughout the creative process for Cracked, I too drew on my own bodily horizon as playwright and director.
When I speak, my head rests gently on my neck, turning simply when I look to people, and my limbs seem to move as almost an extension of my words.

As the inquirer in this research study, I am an ‘outsider’ in that I am asking the questions pertinent to the inquiry. I am also an ‘insider’ in that I am examining my own notes, journals (etc.) gathered from the process of creating *Cracked* and I have an intimate knowledge of how theatre is created. As such, I am deeply implicated in both the research story itself and the telling of the research story (Denzin, 1997, p. 92). As an artist-researcher myself, deeply involved in both the creation of *Cracked* and the field of research-informed theatre more broadly, I worked to navigate issues of control and power carefully. I am telling the story of how artist-researchers implicate themselves in the creative process of research-informed theatre as one of those artist-researchers. This gives me invaluable insight into the process itself; I am aware of the epistemological assumptions being made as part of creating research-informed theatre and my experience is a resource for exploring the phenomenon. However, I also interviewed four actors as part of my study – my experience of creation is not the same as theirs and I carefully worked not to allow my own experience to override theirs. I have been careful throughout this study to be receptive to their words and expressions, especially when it diverted from my own. In short, this study is not about me, but I am an intricate part of the story which has both advantages and limitations (Denzin, 1997, p. 218; see also Creswell, 2013, pp. 214-217).

In analysing my data I came to note that I might be exposing myself in very vulnerable and deeply emotional ways through this dissertation that I had not originally considered. I recognized that, in writing the play, I was able to draw on my own experience and implicate myself within the creative process precisely because I knew that other artist-researchers would be adding their own layers of experience with mine as part of the performance. For example, when I wrote the scene “Tom is Lost,” about how a husband of a person living with dementia feels disoriented when his wife does not recognize him in a moment of sexual intimacy, I drew heavily on my imaginings of what my own relationship with my husband might be like if one of us was living with dementia. I was able to do this without risking direct exposure of my husband and me in part because I understood that the actors would also be bringing their own experiences and imaginings to the performance of the scene (I more fully analyse the process of writing this scene in Chapter 5). While my process as playwright was vulnerable and exposing, I was not directly implicating myself or my personal relationships given the multi-layered process. I wrote in my e-journal:
I understand that it is not solely ME up there [on stage as part of the performance]; my experiences are intertwined with other peoples’ experiences in the telling. The actors performing the script, for example, bring themselves and their own emotions to the performance. I am able to go deep [in the process of playwriting] because I am not exposing anything directly. The experience on stage is ‘authentic’ because I am drawing, in part, from a personal, vulnerable place IN ME, but it is also not about ME (June 2, 2014).

Through my analysis and in writing my dissertation, where I am attempting to tease apart and make apparent the process of creation which deeply implicates the artist-researcher, I began to recognize that the potential to expose myself also included my family and those around me, who are intertwined in my own personal experience. As such, in writing my dissertation, I have attempted to be as transparent as possible about the creative process, while also being conscious to not expose too much about my close relationships and even aspects of myself. For example in Chapter 5, though I reflect on the ways I drew on my relationship with my husband when writing the scene Tom is Lost, I have attempted to keep the discussion linked to the theoretical concepts of embodiment, imagination and foolishness, rather than focusing on the specific ways my relationship with my husband is actually enacted and how the actual enactment of our relationship informed my writing process. As an example, I discuss the space of our friendship and how the ways we gesture towards each other shapes and constructs that space, but I do not discuss what those specific gestures are.

Reflections on case study methodology and my research journey

Case study allowed me to delve deeply into an example of a research-informed theatre project to conceptualize the ways artist-researcher imaginatively and foolishly engage their embodiment as part of their creative process for research-informed theatre. This methodology provided a way for me to explore a process I practice intimately as an artist-researcher by expanding my frame to include other artist-researchers and draw on a range of data to broaden the experience of the play beyond my own. For any artist-researcher or arts-based qualitative researcher looking to conduct an exploratory study of arts-based methods, case study was sufficiently structured, in that there were adequate limitations and depth to my chosen case, as well as being adequately open to support the range of uncontrolled data I drew on in my analysis.

As an artist-researcher with my roots in artistic practice, one of my greatest challenges over the course of my PhD program more broadly and this study in particular was learning about
the specifics of qualitative research and its paradigms. Coming from a practice that involves imaginative exploration through my emotions, senses and body, learning about qualitative research and case study took tremendous time and effort. Broadly, critical and interpretive qualitative researchers explore questions looking to address how or why (as opposed to questions addressing how many, as in quantitative research) by reflexively considering their own positionality, philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks informing the design and analysis of their particular study. As artist-researchers creating research-informed theatre, we do with our bodies. This is not to suggest that artist-researchers are not engaged in questions of how or why, but rather than embodied spontaneity is vital and a certain amount of unplanned ‘diving in’ is required. While there is often a messiness to qualitative research, greater emphasis is given to organizing, reflecting and consciously thinking through issues. Good qualitative researchers reflect at every stage of their process, continually drilling down to find meaning, thinking again, consciously and iteratively linking theory with data analysis in order to then join in a larger scholarly conversation about the topic at hand. This required that I learn to organize, analyze and articulate in particular scientific ways beyond sensory, emotional, imaginative and embodied exploration. While there is much to be gained from deep intellectual exploration within the social sciences, refining intellectual analytic skills, and joining specific scholarly conversations particularly within qualitative research, to do so as an artist-researcher requires attending to a particular cerebral, organizational process which was unfamiliar.

Of course, to double back on my caveat, this lack of familiarity with qualitative inquiry also proved to be an asset in exploring the artist-researcher’s process as it expanded my understanding of what exploration could be beyond the emotional, sensory, imaginative and embodied. This unfamiliarity promoted a kind of ‘undoing’ or ‘unbecoming’ and feeling uncertain stretched my inherent assumptions about what I thought I knew about artistic exploration. I was able to look at the artistic process more critically because I was being challenged by new approaches and methodologies within qualitative research. Ultimately, the time and effort it has taken to become immersed in qualitative inquiry broadly and case study specifically has strengthened my scholarship as well as the design and execution of this study. It has additionally left me in a unique position as a scholar with capacities as both an artist-researcher and as an emerging social scientist, with refined skills to approach certain research questions with a particular kind of intellectual savviness.
Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the specific ways that I explored the artist-researchers’ creative processes for research-informed theatre. With these methods clarified, in the following chapters I analyse my data through my three theoretical concepts of embodiment, imagination and foolishness, to fully explicate the ways artist-researchers engage themselves in the creative process for research-informed theatre. Specifically the next chapter explores in detail how artist-researchers work relationally with each other and with research findings, including experiences of research participants.
5. **Modes of practice: playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting**

Despite that those taking up an aesthetically objective approach to their performed research assume that all involved in the work will be removed or distant from the process, through my study I found that artist-researchers deeply implicate themselves in the creative performance process vulnerably and bravely through their bodies and imagination. Their bodies are the prime sites for imaginative and foolish interpretation and analysis. In order to more fully understand the ways that artist-researchers engage their bodies as imaginative, foolish spaces for attending and action, this chapter will explore the intertwining nature of three ways of doing, or modes of practice: *playful extending, foolish disrupting* and *inventive disrupting*. The interwoven nature of these modes is relevant: one does not happen without the others. The artist-researcher *foolishly disrupts* her own bodily horizon through embodied and imaginative experimentation, by bravely risking being wrong. Additionally, the artist-researcher also *playfully extends*, or reaches out through her gestures, to enact embodied, imagined understandings of the researcher findings. The artist-researcher cannot playfully extend without foolishly disrupting; in order to enact gestures of her embodied, imagined understanding of the findings, the artist-researcher must vulnerably and openly disrupt her own bodily horizon, knowing she will likely fail in her attempts. The embodied, imaginative understanding which is the foundation for the gestural enactment comes through the failing and the foolish disruptions. Additionally, as the artist-researcher foolishly disrupts and playfully extends, surrounding physical and social/cultural/historical spaces are also *inventively disrupted*, in that they are re-invented anew by being extended into differently. As the artist-researcher enacts her gesture, the space becomes something different than what it actually is in the performed moment, inviting audience members to engage in an aesthetic relationship with the stage-action.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the multiple ways that artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt as part of their research-informed investigative work. I will draw on several exemplars from my data, including interview transcripts with study participants, my electronic journal and hand written rehearsal journals, as well as video footage from interviews, rehearsals, works-in-progress presentations and performances, in order to explicate the intertwining nature of playful extending and foolish/inventive disruptions.
First I draw on improvisation and theatrical exercises we engaged in as a creative ensemble early in our process of developing *Cracked*. While we approached exploration in a number of ways such as physical improvisation, written journals, drawing, scrap-books, among others, for my purposes I will examine specific theatrical techniques that highlight the intertwining nature of playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting.

Second, I draw on excerpts from my interviews with actor/participants. The examples I use from these interviews highlight how the playful extensions and foolish/inventive disruptions of the actors, as artist-researchers, intertwine throughout the creative process of research-informed theatre. What is notable about these interview excerpts is not only what the actors said with their words, but also how their physicality changed in these videotaped moments; specifically they touched their own bodies more and differently than during other parts of their interview, as well as referencing space beyond their own body in different ways. As such, I will indicate within the quotes what the actors were doing with their bodies as they spoke. However, to examine the actors’ verbal descriptions of their work is insufficient. As such, I will also draw on video footage from rehearsal and performances as well as my own hand written notes from rehearsal to explicate how the disrupting and extending took place in time and space.

Following these excerpts, I draw on two scenes from the script to discuss how the artist-researcher team, including actors and playwright/director, playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt as part of the creation process. First I reference a scene called *Tom is Lost* and focus on my own process as research-informed playwright. Next I discuss the opening scene for the play, *The Lobster Trap Scene*, to explore different intertwining expressive modes (such as the actors’ own bodily movements, the language of the script, the structure of the scene) the team of artist-researchers drew on to playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt.

**Exemplars**

*Theatrical exploration – ‘rounds’ and improvisation*

In this section I highlight several theatrical exploration exercises that we engaged with early in our creative process. The first is an improvisation technique called Rounds. Rounds were introduced by artist-researcher Mary Ellen MacLean who learned this form of theatre creation from her mentor Tony Montanaro and who practiced this with her theatre company Jest In Time. Here Mary Ellen describes Rounds:
Basically it's going around. You sit all in a line in a studio, in a living room, wherever. Each person gets up one at a time, and in the beginning you just get up there and you just move in whatever impulsive way you wanna do it. However you feel in that moment, whatever it is. It does not have to make sense. It shouldn't make sense. It's just you're physicalizing how you feel. What a great thing. Kids are brilliant at it. Puppies are really good at it. If you could access it like that as actors all the time.

You go around and you get up one at a time and you sit back right where you got up from so you keep it going. You would do this—you could do it all day, 'cuz it's a practice. Everyone will get up there and do their—myself included, your default personality moves that you like to do. You have to get that all out of the way. It might take a couple of days of doing this together. It's a trust-building—for sure, you have to be really exposed and out there and fun and silly.

Jenny discusses Rounds as *doing not thinking* and I build on these ideas in my electronic journal:

…each person goes up in front [of the group] and does some kind of physical expression in the moment – not planning beforehand, but spontaneously. This is deceptively difficult not to write in advance what you think you should do. And as we repeated through the line, it became more apparent how we rely on certain things to get us through – we had to shed our usual stuff and go beyond, to our ‘non-thinking-ness’

What becomes apparent in these three descriptions is the emphasis on *doing* thereby moving exploratory work beyond relying exclusively on intellect to include our bodies. Without going so far as to say artist-researchers do not think at all in this process, the emphasis in the work is to engage the body more directly in exploration, pushing beyond the intellect. As artist-researchers engaging in Rounds, we aim to “not write in advance,” not move into intellect or “be clever,” but bring the physical response in relation to others, “in front” of the group, and in the present *now* moment, tracing relationally forwards and backwards through time and within space (Manning & Massumi, 2014). The work does not reside in “what you think you should do” but rather spontaneously, impulsively, physically expressing. The artist-researcher is “physicalizing how [she] feel[s]” through Rounds. In this way, as part of this exploratory work, the artist-researcher attends to her emotional, sensory “(re)action” or her orientation (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8) to what she is feeling in her body and expressing it through her physical actions relationally in front of others, in space and in time. Artist-researchers extend themselves in space, towards and with each other as a way to explore and experiment with vulnerability, risking ridiculousness.
As part of this, the practice of Rounds allows the artist-researcher to “shed her own stuff” and attend to her own relationship to what she is feeling within the group, including awareness of her own bodily horizon as part of exploration. I would suggest this “shedding” is not a complete discarding of self, but an opportunity for the artist-researcher to vulnerably become aware of her own bodily horizon, as a “contact that… opens up other ways of facing the world” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 564). This attention to bodily horizon helps the artist-researcher move towards imagining beyond it and disrupting it.

It should be noted that many of the Rounds we did were utter failures, in that they did not resonate emotionally or sensorily with our fellow artist-researchers and they were not visually interesting or polished. We often tripped (literally and metaphorically) or stayed up in front of others too long leading to the performed gestures being excessive or boring. Most of our attempts were, frankly, ridiculous and quite silly. However, we continued to vulnerably enact gestured expressions of what we were feeling in the moment, in relation to other people, thereby attending to our own bodily horizons in relation to others. Rounds, then, as part of our process for *Cracked* were a kind of embodied research; a method to attend to, explore and investigate the artist-researcher’s bodily horizon in relation to other people, ideas, space and time.

Rounds also allowed us as artist-researchers to begin to work cohesively as an ensemble and “build trust,” as the work requires being vulnerable or “exposed” in our own response and expression as well as receptive to the response/expression of our fellow artist-researchers. This emphasis on embodied, sensory, emotional response and expression is not to say that the intellectual interpretive work or decision making does not occur at some point in the overall process; the focus in Rounds is exploring from the artist-researcher’s body as an imaginative and foolish site for attending and action.

In addition to Rounds as exploratory, the practice also generated theatrical material that would later be refined and shaped into the play itself. As Jenny says: “And I’m really pleased and the number of stories that came directly from those Rounds that are in our final piece. I would say the larger part of the play.” There is the potential with Rounds to adapt the technique to begin to respond to specific concepts or research findings and refine them theatrically. Mary Ellen explains how Rounds can be adapted, and while she references the theme of “going to the beach” in her description below, the adaptation of this technique could be applied to any idea as we did in rehearsals for *Cracked* around the concept of dementia:
Then as you get comfortable as a group doing that, then you pick the topic or the theme that you're working on or sections of. Often what I do is, so you pick—say the theme is, I don't know, going to the beach. What does that mean to everybody? You just freeform words like, ocean, sand, sand fleas, cocktails, I don't know, lawn chairs, white clothing. I don't know, whatever it is. Everyone just says everything that comes to mind and then you do the open rounds. It's still wide open so it's not so closed in. A little bit more closed but you still approach it with that openness. You have all that information that you just said and you just riff on those ideas. That takes a while for people to get their head around, because then when the topic comes into being, that's when we get all very closed. You wanna keep it open. Open, open, open.

Mary Ellen emphasizes that by “keeping it open” artist-researchers aim to continue to attend to and respond from the body through Rounds, even when introducing a particular concept. She continues later in her interview to emphasize the importance of “not closing”: “Because what happens is people get into their brain more. They get into editing. They get into basically, writing. You're not interested in writing at that point. You're interested in improvising.” The physical improvising keeps the ensemble of artist-researchers working and exploring from their bodies; the assumption with “closing” is that if the exploratory work moves too quickly into intellectual decision making, or “writing,” then opportunities might be missed to explore the idea from the body or generate theatrical material from a bodily, sensory, emotional working place.

As the process continues, the ensemble may begin to have more formed ideas around that specific concept, and Rounds can start to be directed by particular artist-researchers, using each other within those improvisations. I describe in my e-journal:

Mary Ellen then introduced the concept of doing rounds with multiple people. So, one person would lead, take ownership of that particular round and bring people (or one other person) up with them. The lead would give directions (i.e., I need you to stand in a line and nod your heads) and then they would engage in the improv together. These were still quick. So, it was a balance between thinking ahead, planning, doing a bit of ‘writing,’ but then also being open to what happens in the moment during the improv and with the other people. (June 26, 2012)

The emphasis here with these more focused group improvisations remains with exploration and experimentation. While there is some intellectual thought in advance of the improvisation to direct people in the group, the improvisations are quick and the emphasis remains on “what happens in the moment during improv.” By keeping these improvisations on a
theme or directed Rounds “open” (rather than “closed”) we were continuing to risk failure. We often used the phrase “half baked” in our in-studio time in reference to these more focused Rounds, to indicate that we were risking failure through our attempts and were keen to keep the work experimental. In this way, through these directed or more focused Rounds, we continued to foolishly disrupt. However, here the intertwining nature of playful extending and foolish/inventive disruptions becomes apparent. Because of their more focused nature, through directed Rounds, we were also attempting to commit to particular thoughts, follow a particular line, or gesturally enact a particular embodied, imagined understanding of an idea (or playfully extend), while still bravely and vulnerably experimenting, risking failure. These extensions, as being wrong, re-invented or disrupted the surrounding physical and social/cultural/historical spaces in particular ways; these performed ideas and gestures in re-invented space allowed us to see or attend to them differently. The emphasis at this point in the process does not move into decision making about what might be kept as part of the research-informed play or developing a structure for the performance; this shaping happens later. Mary Ellen discusses how these improvised moments can later be shaped into the play itself: “You start creating little scenes, little moments, little images and then you can put them together. Then of course, it transitions between each, become really beautiful. It's all framed, in that case, going to the beach, say.”

While Rounds were one adaptable improvisation technique we used to explore concepts, generate theatrical material and begin to work with as a group, there were many physical exercises we engaged in as an ensemble of artist-researchers that led to new insights on a particular topic. Here is an excerpt from my e-journal on June 26, 2012 where I discuss a physical exercise we did as an ensemble of artist-researchers that led to an in-depth discussion about carrying, lifting, independence and interdependence. I also have extensive notes in my hand-written journal about this discussion, indicating similar ideas.

Then we did an ‘in-between’ exercise after having done Rounds for a while. Mary Ellen led us through a circle exercise, which we touched on yesterday. We stood in a circle and moved in and out, gently following our breath, never stopping moving. Always suspended and in motion. Then, Mary Ellen announced we would be lifting her up – we would come to the centre and all place our hands on her and lift. Then we did it for each person. It was great, we were very safe about it, I never felt concerned and no one else did either from what I could tell. It was a great sensation. And as Mary Ellen put it, we didn’t spend any time concerned with ‘you put your hand here, you support from here’ – we just did it and worked together and followed our breath.
This lifting exercise led to a great discussion about carrying and lifting and supporting people through life. John made some great points about him and his wife walking their daughter down the isle – carrying her through part of her life, supporting her, and sending her onto the next phase together. He also mentioned being a pall bearer. We discussed the importance of trust, of family (by blood or chosen or otherwise), and trying to move away from the dichotomy of ‘independent/dependant’ – but thinking of it more as interdependence. Having a web of people, or a community of people providing support, lifting. And how being lifted means you not only have to trust, but you have to let go: of control, of yourself, of ego… this led to discussion of the metaphor of dance as it relates to people with dementia – the importance of following not leading, and learning to go with someone’s movement (literally and metaphorically). We also discussed how in lifting someone you are also lifting and managing their baggage – and sometimes that is the harder thing to lift than the physical person! (June 26, 2012)

In the first paragraph of my excerpt I describe the lifting exercise we engaged in as an ensemble. In this exercise we worked spatially and in time, in that we formed a circle with our bodies in relation to each other and we moved at the same time in that formation from a large circle to a smaller circle, where we were physically closer to each other. We engaged our physical bodies through our movement, large circle to a smaller circle, and our breath, simultaneously in and out. We engaged our senses, in that we had to observe each other’s movement, listen to each other’s breath and physically touch each other while lifting a particular person. We had to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and also trust each other, as we were each lifted into the air by others. Additionally, as we were lifted, we each attended to that sensation of being lifted by others off the ground into the air.

It should be noted that there were both “successes” and “failures” throughout this exercise. While we were vulnerable and brave in this work, as we had to move ahead with the uncertainty of whether our fellow artist-researchers would lift us “successfully,” no one was actually dropped in the process of lifting, and as such the exercise was a “success” (and “we were very safe about it”). However, these lifts were messy in our movements, and as we moved in and out of our circle from larger to smaller, there were tiny “failures.” At certain points, someone tripped, we bumped each other as we walked, but we moved forward and back despite these failures, attending to ourselves as individuals within the group and to each other as an ensemble.

The bumps and trips, the walking, the listening, the observing, might be described by Manning and Massumi (2014) as the dance of attention, understood as “an attentiveness of the
environment to its own flowering” of which we are a part, and occurs “at the very limit of where experience and imagination… overlap” (p. 6, emphasis in original). Within the dance of attention there is an emphasis on the immediacy of mutual action and emergent relations among people, things, space and time. While it might seem that you are not thinking as you move as the individual within the ensemble, “you were thinking, with your movement” (p. 10, emphasis in original). The embodied attentiveness of the artist-researcher, or “wide-awareness” beyond her immediate experience and location as she extends or commits by moving and sensing within the ensemble, is “a performed analysis of the field’s composition” (p. 10). Her perception of the ensemble, as environment or a field, converges with her movement and sensing as action, as a kind of thinking. In navigating the ensemble, the artist-researcher “enter[s] a mode of environmental awareness in which to perceive is to enact thought, and thought is directly relational” (p. 10).

Movement as “motional-relational” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 43) occurs from and with the body of the artist-researcher as an individual, but also occurs in response to and with the other bodies in the ensemble, as well as spatially and temporally. The definition of space and environment comes from the fluidity of the people of the ensemble, in addition to the floor below. The speed at which each of us moved individually, or our timing, is in response to and emerges with the timing of the ensemble. Movement here is a commitment, an embodied, imaginative gesture of our understanding of the ensemble’s dynamic. It is the individual’s anticipation of moving ahead and back with the ensemble that builds upon her perception of her current, ephemeral experience and propels her to move. As part of this movement, the artist-researcher does not know the precise outcome (Perhaps she will trip? Perhaps she will bump into someone?), and yet she moves anyway despite impending failure; in fact, those failures help her better analyze the dynamic of the ensemble and her relationship to it. Walking is an action the artist-researcher engages in as part of her everyday life and as such it might be an action that disappears as part of her bodily horizon; however, through this exercise, movement provides a wonky point of contact where, as artist-researchers, we were able to attend to our own walking within the ensemble differently. The space of the ensemble was also continually re-invented as we individually moved, or extended, within it. Additionally, the walking/moving was also playful in that, as we committed or extended ourselves through walking in our rehearsal studio, we created an enhanced ‘being-in-the-world’ (Thrift, 2007, p. 74). The relational movement of the ensemble becomes a place of embodied possibility with your intention of being in sync. The
presence of the individual artist-researcher, as being in the *now* moment, and movement affects
and leaves impressions upon the emergent ensemble; she attends to those around her without
self-erasure. In other words, she draws on her own embodied experience of being in the *now*
moment, she attends to the moving ensemble with imaginative “wide-awareness,” and then she
does (or moves or dances) as part of her attending to and/or disrupting of the crowd despite
uncertainty.

Our discussion as an ensemble after the exercise was in depth and multi-layered. We
related the physical experience of working together, of attending to and extending with our
bodies and senses, to experiences in our own lives such as walking a child down the wedding
aisle or being a pallbearer. We discussed interrelated concepts we had experienced in the
exercise such as “interdependence” (rather than the binary of independence/dependence), “trust”,
“letting go”, “following the lead of others.” Ultimately, each of these themes found their way
into the final production of *Cracked*, and was also a thematic interest of the health researchers
that we had discussed in our May 2012 workshop, and earlier in the June 2012 workshop as well.
It was *doing* and *experiencing* the lifting exercise as a group through our bodies, senses, in space
and in time, or engaging in a “dance of attention,” that allowed us to attend to our own
orientation to our individual selves, each other as artist-researchers, and to the room we were
working within. The lifting exercise, where we both *playfully extended* and *foolishly/inventively
disrupted*, allowed us to imagine beyond the immediacy of our experience in that room, and
connect our relational, collective experience of the exercise to moments in our individual
everyday lives. This physical exercise provided a wonky moment that “open[ed] up other ways
of facing the world” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 564) and we could imagine the relationship between the
physical experience of the exercise and broader concepts and experiences, thereby understanding
the concepts differently.

The final example I will draw on for this section comes from a quote from my e-journal. I
describe an exercise in my e-journal that I led the actors through in our first meeting as a group
of artist-researchers in May 2012 as a way to introduce them to the theoretical concept of
embodied self-hood. ³

³ Embodied selfhood is a theoretical concept developed by team member Pia Kontos (2004, 2012a, 2012b), which
emphasizes the importance of bodily movements and gestures for self-expression. Based on her ethnographic
research in long-term care homes with persons living with dementia, she draws upon Merleau-Ponty’s notion of
non-representational intentionality and Bourdieu’s notion of habitus to argue that despite even severe cognitive
impairment, selfhood persists in and through the body. Embodied selfhood is a perspective that has challenged
In essence, I asked each person to take on an animal – imagine they were that animal, and take on the characteristics of that animal 100%. Then reduce the animal and take on more human characteristics – down to 80% animal, 30% animal, 15% animal. I started to ask them questions about who this person was: how old, what do they do for a living, where were they born, did they go to school, what’s their bedtime routine (etc). I was not asking them to make any decisions, just contemplate these things as they embody the characteristics of the animal. Then, we all sat down and I asked two people to go up and be their animals – then ‘dial it down’ – and once they were at the 3-4% mark, to interact with each other. We did this twice with two sets of actors.

This lead nicely into a talk Pia [Kontos] gave about embodied self-hood and dementia. In essence we were trying to connect the work that actors do, and are trained in from the early points in their career, to more theoretical concepts about personhood and linking the work the actors do on an embodied level with people with dementia and health care. (May 23, 2012)

As artistic leader, I chose to introduce the theoretical concept of embodied selfhood to the actors through an embodied exercise. I assumed that the best point of engagement for the actors was not for them to intellectually understand this theoretical concept about embodiment but rather to engage them through the prime tools they use as part of their craft: their bodies, imaginations, and actions. By asking them to embody the characteristics of animals, I was asking them to physically dive into the imagined animal/character’s layers of experience from the starting point of their own bodily horizons as artist-researchers. By engaging our imaginations, the artist-researchers recalled their observations of other species and imagined those physical characteristics in order to “take them on” physically. By asking the artist-researchers to imagine and gesturally enact, or commit to, characteristics of animals, I was asking them to immerse themselves openly and playfully into the exercise, without intellectual pre-judgement. Here the artist-researchers were open to failure: they very well could be wrong in their portrayal of an animal/character. Part of the exercise included time for the actors to physically experiment with the disruption of their own bodily horizon and their extensions towards their chosen animal for this precise reason: they were likely going to fail in their initial attempts at enacting the animal/character and as such needed time to playfully try different things. The artist-researchers imagined a particular animal’s movements, bodily shape, posture, ‘personality’ characteristics based on actions of the animal (for example, a wolf is a predator, a

assumptions of existential loss with dementia, expanded understandings of dementia by incorporating the body and theorizing its interrelationship with the larger social order, and informed practice change in long-term care settings.
chipmunk gathers and stashes nuts). In order to “take on” those characteristics physically, the artist-researcher had to risk being ridiculous and approach the exercise with “wide-awareness,” imaginatively focusing on the disorienting work of disrupting her own bodily horizon through her gestural enactment of her embodied, imaginative understanding of the animal/character. By both opening up to possibilities of how an animal moves, or might have a personality based on its engagement with the world, the artist-researcher could simultaneously attend to her own physicality and bodily horizon as a way to “take on” those external characteristics of others, and understand the theoretical concept of embodied selfhood differently.

By asking them to engage their own bodies, including their emotions, senses, and actions, we were working from the assumption that these artist-researchers would gain a deeper understanding of the imagined animal/character’s interrelationship within her world. By asking them to contemplate questions such as “how old” this person was, “what do they do for a living,” “where were they born,” “did they go to school,” “what’s their bedtime routine” (etc.), as artistic leader I was working from the assumption that the social/cultural/historical spaces surrounding this imagined animal/character would influence the embodiment of that animal/character, and be reflected in that animal/character’s daily, embodied actions and routines such as bedtime. There is an understanding that “the “here” of the body” and the “where” of its dwelling” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 8) are interrelated and impress upon each other. Through these imaginings of the animal/character’s characteristics, intermingled with attention to their own bodies, the artist-researchers as animal/characters were able to “continually become who and what they [were]” (Greene, 2001, p. 119). Additionally the process of “dialing down” the amount of animal the artist-researchers had physically “taken on” in order to integrate more human characteristics as part of their extensions, the artist-researcher first imagined and “play[ed] on what [she had] perceived” to “incarnate it and make it [hers]” as a way to envision and enact this change (Greene, 2001, p. 11). This imaginative work is on-going, not fixed, in that it enables the artist-researcher to continually envision anew, extend beyond immediate experience and become the animal/character in relation to other people, things and within space.

Elise – “settle into that body”

As my next example, I will explore the ways that actor/participant Elise both playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted through her creative work within the creative process for developing Cracked. I will closely examine excerpts from her interview with me, and explore both what she said, as seen through the transcript of her interview, as well as video
footage of her interview where I was able to observe her body and physicality. In addition to this I will also draw on data from video footage of rehearsal, works-in-progress presentations and performances of *Cracked* to more clearly explicate how Elise playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted in time and space.

This excerpt is an exchange from our interview, and Elise discusses the way she attending to and imagined the elder character she played in *Cracked*, as a composite character based on research participants experiences.

Elise— Well with [names her character], she has um, a different voice, a different voice than me (wraps her fingers around her throat) because she started off in life with a different language. Um, a different pronunciations of things (brings finger tips to the hinge of her jaw). Um, she’s lived (drops backs of hands heavily to tops of her thighs) so much more than I have and probably than I ever will. Um, and that will take its toll on your voice (touch throat with left hand), on your breath (touch diaphragm). Um, she has a child (hands in front of body, fingers open and extended, palms facing herself). Um, she, which is another thing that changes things about a person, uh, about emergency situations (gentle fists in front of body, moving up and down) or, dramatics or… (laughs)

Or, you know, that kind of stuff and that sort of grounds a person, um, to, living with that type of worry. That type of pride, and, she is in love. She has a, a steady, faithful, wonderful, supportive husband. Um. That changes a person. And to experience love for that (touch diaphragm twice)… that number of years will, uh, have an effect on your breath and your voice (left hand to throat). Um. Eyesight is never as perfect as (laughs) you start off with. Well, for most people. It generally diminishes. And those aches (right hand grasps left shoulder) and pains you have from doing silly things when you were a kid, they actually start (right hand drops, left hand grasps left shoulder) to bug you when you get older. Knees from constantly walking (both hands rub both knees), and uh, cleaning up after life. Start to really take a toll on the knees (rubs knees again) and ankles (rubs forearms, wrists) and uh, and elbows (touching elbow) and wrists and shoulders (touching shoulder). Um, and the, the weight (each hand squeezes each shoulder, right to right, left to left) of a job, a full time job for 40 years. All of this is, it’s a lightness (hands overlap on sternum/clavicle) because there’s so much experience and love, but it’s also kind of a heavier (drops hands, moves torso side to side), deeper connection to what’s around you. Um. And with [names her character] it was just a matter of letting that settle. And then the voice starts changing just because of that. Um. Yeah, just because of all that settling.

Me – And when you say ‘settling’ what do you mean by settling.
Elise - Been there done that, uh, let’s work on something new. Or, yeah. I guess it’s sort of grounding…

Me – Settling into you, as the performer or?

Elise - Settling into her. You shrug your shoulders (slouches) you have a different voice, oh and (touches stomach) I’m also sticking out my belly (laughs)

Me - (laughs) Right.

Elise – Then if you’re standing up tall (straightens spine), uh, you know if,, yeah. So you just sort of settle into that body (wiggles torso around), um, those pronunciations (takes jaw in right hand), uh, and those experiences and just naturally things start to change.

With this quote, Elise discusses how she attended to the embodiment of her character (as a composite based on research participants) as part of her creative work. She reflected on specific physical aspects of her character’s body such as her voice, her breath, eyes, knees, ankles, shoulders, elbows, wrists, stomach, and posture. She additionally attended to the ways her character’s bodily horizon was in relation to and influenced by immediate and broader social/cultural/historical spaces, by attending to family relationships, work (such as paid work and house work), and physical and emotional injuries (including those “silly things when you were a kid”). Implicit in this is an understanding of how this character’s “body is the pivot of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962], p. 94), and how the “here” of the body” and the “where” of its dwelling” are interrelated (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 8). Elise understands that the “stuff… that grounds a person,” the stuff that makes a person who they are, is their lived experiences. Elise implicitly understands that there is a kind of infusion of the biological into the personal experience of her character and that her body “nourish[es]” her past experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1962], p. 98). Elise’s character has individuated, or has become herself, through sensing within her environment, as well as with other people, things, in space and time (Manning, 2007, p. xviii).

Elise acknowledges that her character has vastly different embodied experiences from her own, as she has “lived so much more than she has and probably than she ever will.” This character has “a different voice,” “started life with a different language,” she “has a child” (which Elise does not), among other differences. She approaches this difference with an
imaginative “wide-awareness” (Greene, 2001), to attend to possibilities beyond her own lived and immediate experience. She attends to these differences and is receptive to how these “new and unexpected patternings” of this character will be brought “into [her] reflected-on experience” as Elise (Greene, 2001, p. 11). Drawing on her own embodied experiences as a starting point for exploration, this wide-awareness provides “new vantage points on the world” for Elise beyond the immediacy of her own senses, emotions and physicality.

Through her exploratory work, Elise “settles into” her embodied, imagined understanding of her character as a *reinhabiting of her own body*. This “settling into” indicates an interrelationship between the starting point of her own body as the artist-researcher and the body of her character. The phrase “settling into” also indicates an on-going process of happening and doing. Elise does not just “get it” and extend into the character as an amalgam of research participants’ experiences seamlessly or “successfully.” She continually foolishly disrupts herself, as she tries new and different things with her own body to experiment with that “settling into.”

The relational aspect of the “settling in” is relevant. Elise later discusses how this “settling into” does not only take place between her own body and that of the research participant, but also in relation to her fellow artist-researchers. As she explains:

Elise – And then it’s really just a matter of working with people and see how they react to [names her character], seeing how… the words come.

Me – and when you say, when you say working with people do you mean other actors…

Elise – the other actors…

Me – or audience members…

Elise – …and director, just seeing how it comes across to them how they respond with their text.

Despite that I introduce audience members in our exchange Elise keeps her focus on her fellow artist-researchers in discussing the creation process for research-informed theatre: specifically fellow actors and director. Elise discusses how she uses the response of these artist-researchers to her creation of her character, their “(re)action” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8), that provides a safe experimental space for her to be wrong and assess her own gestural enactment of her embodied, imaginative understanding of the research. Elise describes that fellow artist-researchers do not necessarily provide verbal, intellectual feedback to her creative work. It is through their own
playful extending, how they respond to her with their own gestural enactment of their embodied, imaginative understanding, which provides this relational feedback to her creative work.

Vital to the relational nature of playful extending and foolish disrupting is the necessity of failure or “messing up” in creative work, and not resting in assumed or comfortable ways of gesturing or extending. Here Elise explains:

Elise - You start making glaring errors, you start um, messing up where you, your normal patterns your normal behaviour of this character that you’ve developed for this character. You, yeah, you sort of twist it all around.

Me – And what does that look like twisting it all around?

Elise – It looks very hesitant, it looks like I’ve forgotten my lines, which I probably have.

Me – (laughs)

Elise – It looks rough and uh, un-rehearsed and like people are searching and almost getting there. And then it comes back to that sweet spot where people are just communicating. People that we’ve developed that we’re portraying as honestly as we can. Are now starting to communicate and rely on each other and trust each other. And work together as a team.

This “sweet spot” Elise mentions, of “just communicating,” is one of the aims as an ensemble in creating research-informed theatre. However, to move towards this “sweet spot,” the artist-researcher risks being ridiculous as she purposefully disrupts her own creative work, as a way to continue to see that work in a new way; making it “imperfect” as a way to move it towards working relationally, or “starting to communicate and rely on each other and trust each other.” This disruptive work takes place, however, because the artist-researcher tries different gestures, or commits differently, through “messing it up.” She purposefully disrupts her “normal patterns of her normal behaviour of this character” as part of the “settling into,” as a way to move towards this relational communication. This disruption of the “normal patterns” of the character by extending or gesturing differently contributes to making the work “honest” and “alive,” as active, emotional, embodied, and sensory in the present now moment. In this way, as an artist-researcher, Elise is not searching for permanence, as she continually disrupts her creative work in order “to listen to the sound of the “what” that fleets,” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 565).

In returning to the original excerpt from her interview, I will highlight that Elise engages her body and actions as she reflects on how she attended to her character. She directly points to,
and senses her own physical body with her hands as she reflects and discusses with me as her ‘audience.’ In this way, even throughout her interview as Elise, she experiments with the bodily horizon and physicality of her character and indicates that the way she better understands her character is through her body, movements/actions and senses. While she acknowledges that she and her character have vastly different life experiences, she relates to her character through her own sensing body as an artist-researcher, as well as what that body does by disrupting her own bodily horizon and gesturing towards the bodily horizon of her character. For example, when she describes to me how “You shrug your shoulders,” she also gestures the slouching of her shoulders to help herself understand better and to articulate this to me as her interviewer. She laughs as she notices that she is “also sticking out her belly” as she looks to and touches her belly which is protruding differently than how she might normally not protrude her belly within her bodily horizon as Elise. Her laughter indicates that she is not concerned whether this protruding belly is a “correct” gesture or commitment towards her character; rather she is foolishly disrupting her own bodily horizon as she playfully extends towards that of her character for my understanding. Here we catch a glimpse of the interrelatedness of foolish disruptions and playful extending, as it is through what Elise does with her body, her gestures as playful commitments or extensions towards her character in the moment of the interview, that she also disrupts her own bodily horizon.

It is her gestural work in the rehearsal hall or in the performance itself that the interrelatedness of foolish/inventive disruptions and playful extending can be seen, and more clearly indicates the spaciality and temporality of this work. Here I will draw specifically on the elder character that Elise played in Cracked, who she refers to in her interview. Through what I observed in video footage of rehearsal and performances, Elise playfully extends towards the bodily horizon of her elder character differently than her own, through her movements, gestures and voice. Her shoulders are slightly rounded and lifted gently towards her ears. She takes shorter steps, and while her arms are crooked at her elbow as her elder character in a similar way that she might also bend her arms as Elise, her hands are far more tentative and extend hesitantly. When gesturing, her arms do not fully extend broadly, and move in a slightly jerkier or stiff way. As the elder character, she pronounces her words differently than Elise does within her own bodily horizon. I observed in this footage that while Elise and her elder character share the same physical body, their bodily horizons, or how they extend into space with their actions, are different.
The ways that Elise gestures also indicates or invents space. In one scene, Elise walks to the downstage line (towards the audience) and looks gently up, then out far away from herself as if looking for something. She then turns her body and looks around the stage resting her eyes upon three chairs that are in a line. She walks towards these chairs, and, using her arm to guide herself, she sits. These subtle gestures, the looking up, the looking out into the audience far away, turning and looking around the stage and stopping to notice the chairs/bench indicate that she is in a large space, perhaps one she is not completely familiar with. We learn as the scene progresses that she is in a public place waiting for her husband. While her gestures might not overtly tell the audience she is in a public place immediately, the combination of gestures from the other actors in the scene, including their movements and words indicates to the audience that a public space has been invented for this scene. Contrast this with another scene where Elise as her elder character similarly walks downstage and looks out to the audience. This time however, she does not move her head up and look far away into the audience, her eyes moving around. Rather, as she looks out she gently rests her gaze as if looking to something familiar; her eyes are soft. She steps with softness as if wearing slippers. As she turns towards three different chairs in a line (indicating a different space through their placement) she does not search with her posture or head movements. She turns gently and walks directly towards it as if knowing it is there. Indeed, in this scene Elise as her elder character is in her home, which has begun to be invented through her subtle gestures and movements.

However, as seen in rehearsal and works-in-progress presentation footage and from my hand written rehearsal journals, Elise does not commit to her character’s bodily horizon easily and without failure. Outside of rehearsal and as part of her exploratory work, she met with and had extensive conversations with persons originally from Europe who had similar experiences to the character, through war and revolution. She attended to their tones of voice, the emotion in their voices as they spoke. She listened carefully to their accents. In rehearsal, she then attempted to put that accent into her own mouth and body by foolishly disrupting the movements of her mouth, tongue and breathing and the relationship between those movements and her vocal chords. She continued to get that accent wrong; she did not roll her ‘r’ the right way, rather keeping the sound further back in her mouth, instead of at the tip of her tongue, among other difficulties. She continued to experiment with those gestures despite failing; in fact, the failures allowed her to understand her own mouth and accent as Elise better and differently. The relationship between the shapes her mouth made in speaking, her muscle usage and her breathing
which engaged her vocal chords as part of her normative bodily horizon needed to be bravely and vulnerably disrupted, which she did through her enactments and continually gesturing despite failing.

In this way, Elise foolishly disrupts her own bodily horizon through her playful gestures and extending towards her character. She uses her own body to imagine the experiences of her elder character and playfully extends towards that character’s bodily horizon by how she vulnerably does differently; through her rounded, lifted shoulders, through her stiffer movements, through the different pronunciations of her words, among others. Through her playful extending, she vulnerably makes herself available to the enactment of the character as well as to her fellow artist-researchers in the scene, and her audience watching the play. The new bodily horizon for the elder character becomes what it is by Elise gesturally enacting the embodied, imaginative understanding of that character as a composite based on research participants’ experiences.

*James – “We don’t have a set that looks like a hospital”*

In this quote, James talks about the importance of having firsthand experience of engaging with participants as a way to portray their experiences.

Well, it’s, it’s firsthand experience so you’re actually able to see somebody and talk to somebody, and though you’re, I don’t consciously kind of, I’m not consciously trying to mimic that person, it is, it is all (brings fingers to sternum gently), um, sort of, you internalize the (moves fingers up and down sternum/chest), uh, information and then you express it (moves fingertips/hands away from body and opens palms). So, for me interpreting a character is to try to make it as truthful as possible. And, so, so knowing that information (gestures with left hand away from body) is uh, and then when I express it, I mean it’s difficult for me to say exac..., to explain exactly how that happens (curls fingers, draws up towards chin), but, it’s an internal process (left knuckles to sternum/chest) and then it comes out (both arms extend forward, torso leans forward slightly). And because you have actual firsthand experience of that, of that, with that conversation (right hand lifts to chest height, and first two fingers make a tiny circle), that information is in there (points to body with both hands) and when it comes out (both hands extend forward, palms up) hopefully (tilts head to right, then upright), it has some more of a ring of truth to it than it would, than would be if you hadn’t had that conversation.

James discusses how, without mimicking the research participant, he is able to “internalize the information and then express it” through creative work. He struggles here to describe “exactly
how that happens,” other than to say “it’s an internal process and then it comes out.” When he speaks of the process being internal, he indicates his own physical body. He indicates strongly that the immediate experience of meeting or being in direct relation with the research participant affects how you, as the artist-researcher, both receive, interpret, and then express or portray that experience. Emphasizing the “firsthand experience” of engaging with the research participant indicates that he draws on his senses, emotions and imagination to relate.

Shortly after this moment in the interview, however, James discusses how he observes the person he is both playing (as a character) and the original participant (who informed the character’s development), and then brings those observation into the performance space, as an imagined hospital/health care facility.

You have to, um, then um, you know look at where that person [character based on research participant] is (gestures a square shape away from his body, indicating space), if the person is in a hospital talking to another care, health care professional, then you have to, you know, see that to the best of your ability. Uh, to create that, so you know my whole thing is if you, if I make it real for myself (points at chest) then it, it’s apt to be real for the audience (points away from himself). Um, so, so, the tools are, you know, this is the tool (runs hands from top of torso over body down past knees), the tool is the human body, the voice, you know your eyes, your physicality and your brain (touches finger to forehead) because you’ve got to memorize the lyric and memorize the words (laughs). You’ve got to be in the space (hands open away from him, at chest height – move open and around indicating space beyond himself), so you have to try to the best of your ability just see where you are, you’re creating this for an audience. There isn’t, we don’t have a set that looks like a hospital (opens hands again, indicating space beyond himself), so I have to see the hospital, be in the hospital and then the audience is going to accept that.

James discusses how it is through his own body and senses, how he observes and sees things, as well as his intellect, how he can process what he observes intellectually, that he begins to understand the experiences of the character based on research participants as “that person” (as an amalgam character/research participant). As part of this, James also imagines the space where the scene takes place, “to see where you are,” the hospital/health care setting, as “we don’t have a set that looks like a hospital.” He draws on his own body to “see” or attend to the health care provider as character based on research participant with “wide-awareness,” as open awareness and extension beyond the current situation, with an attention to what that person is saying and experiencing. However, as he discusses and as he indicates with his gestures in the interview footage, he also has to attend to the space with a kind of “wide-awareness” too. James attends to
the space with openness to imagine and expand beyond what it is as an “empty space” (Brook, 1968). The performance space for Cracked, ultimately, is relatively empty with the intention of allowing all involved, including audience members, to “fill the space” with their imagination (Brook, 1993, p. 32). Three times in this excerpt, James physically gestures space as an extension of his own physical body, indicating that his own body is implicated in creating the performance space as an imagined hospital/health care setting, or its inventive disruption. James assumes that by imagining the space of the hospital through what he “sees” as well as his own body (as indicated by his gestures), that audience members are “going to accept that” as part of their aesthetic relationship to the play; that they will participate in this performance through their own imaginative work and as such “becom[e] an accomplice to the action” (Brook, 1993, p. 32).

Ultimately, it is through his physical, sensing, thinking body that he invents the imagined space (“the hospital” or health care setting), and the character he is playing who is based on the research participant. Imagining the space alone (as the hospital/health care setting) is not sufficient; the artist-researcher has to “make it real for [him]self” and “be in the hospital,” despite that the performance space is not actually a hospital and the set does not provide a realistic hospital setting. This “being in” that James names and indicates with his gestures is important. If extended, the concept becomes Manning’s “being in relation” (Manning, 2007, p. 115; see also Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 6). This “being in relation” can be understood as being in the now moment, dancing relationally between tenses with other people (as fellow artist-researchers and audience members); this can also be referred to as presence. By indicating a space beyond himself with his gestures in his interview, James expresses an implicit understanding that his creative work does not take place in isolation, but in relation to physical and social/cultural/historical spaces. He is not only “thinking of” the hospital through his mind or what he imagines, he has to “be in it,” and “create it” with what he does, his gestures or how he commits to the performed moment. By “being in” the performance space and invented hospital/health care setting, he extends towards it through what he does, with his actions. He has to recall his sensory, embodied experiences of hospitals/health care settings and speaking with health care providers as a starting point in order to imagine the hospital/health care setting to be created in the performed moment; he imagines the hospital/healthcare setting and re-inhabits those embodied sensations of “being in” the space of the hospital/health care setting in the performed moment by what he does with his body. He foolishly disrupts both his own bodily horizon and inventively disrupts the empty performance space, or vulnerably and bravely does
differently with his body in space and time, in order to create the imagined space and experience for his audience. He has to observe “that person” as the research participant – as he describes it, as a health care professional – and imagine that person’s experience of “being in” by drawing on his own experience as an embodied source to relate.

How does one imaginatively “be in” or invent different spaces with different people in an “empty” (Brook, 1968) or imaginative performance space? If I am in a hospital speaking with a health care provider, my body engages differently than if I am on a sunny beach playing with my children in the sand. I am in relation to my environment, other people and things through my body, my senses, my emotions. I engage in a dance of attention through my movements, my gestures, my senses, and in those moments and spaces I attend to the flowering or happening of the environment; I perform an analysis of the field’s composition by being in it and attending to it through my movements, gestures and senses (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 10). I inhabit and extend into those (social/cultural/historical) spaces in particular ways in relation to my own bodily horizon. Through the creation of the research-informed play I draw on these dances of attention, these experiences and moments of ‘being-in-the-world’ and push through my imagination to relate to the different experiences of others. It is what my body does in those moments of “being in,” whether in a hospital or on a beach, that I must attend to as an artist-researcher. Those subtleties of action or what my body does, the ways I extend into space in those moments of time are what I must attend to. It is my bodily horizon within the dance of attention that I can refer to in the creative process as I foolishly/inventively disrupt and playfully extend. I walk differently on a hard floor of a hospital than on a shifting sandy beach, for example. It is the way I extend towards the imagined space of the hospital in the performed moment that helps to create that imagined space for others; I playfully extend into the empty space, or disrupt the space by vulnerably doing things differently within it. I extend in this way having additionally disrupted my own bodily horizon in “(re)action” to the research participants’ experiences. I disrupt the emptiness of the space by re-inhabiting it by extending into that space differently: I do things in particular ways, I gesture and I commit to particular directions or actions, so the audience members will “fill the space” (Brook, 1993, p. 32), drawing on similar experiences, spaces, emotions, sensations, and imaginings, in “(re)action” to my imaginative and playful actions.

In turning to video footage of rehearsal and performances, James attends to his own body’s extension into the empty performance space in several key ways. Firstly, in a scene
where he plays a health care provider, he pushes an imaginary, mimed cart of food in the invented dining hall of a long term care home. He does this miming, as a kind of playful extending, in relation to other actors who are playing elders in this long term care home sitting on chairs in semi-circles. The actors playing elders mime imaginary tables, with plates, utensils, cups, and napkins on those imaginary tables. In part what makes the audience participate in this scene, or “become an accomplice to the action” (Brook, 1993, p. 32) is what the actors are doing, their movements as enacted gestures of their embodied, imaginative understanding of sitting in an institutional dining room. The artist-researchers risk failure by inventively disrupting the space through their miming. In returning to James, as he mimes the cart of food, his hands wrap around an imaginary bar, and he pushes the imaginary cart by engaging his arm muscles and stepping more forcefully than if he walks freely without miming the cart. He imagines the shape and weight of the cart based on his previous experience pushing carts, and as he exerts that energy of pushing, he comes to understand the cart and its movements differently, simultaneously attending to audience members’ presence.

These movements of pushing the imaginary cart as gestural commitments disrupt the empty performance space, and it is re-invented as a dining room in a long term care home. Previous to this pushing as an imaginative extension of James’ body, the performance space simply had some chairs placed within it. Its location becomes meaningful to the audience once the actors begin to place (or space) themselves within in, or are in relation to each other and within space in a particular way. The spacing of the ensemble of actors is also a kind of commitment as a gestural understanding of a dining hall in a long term care home. The empty performance space is disrupted through the multiple, relational ways that the actors playfully extend towards a dining room in a long term care home, through their enacted gestures of embodied, imaginative understanding. However, as is captured in my hand-written rehearsal notes, James’ pushing of the cart went through many failures. James worked diligently at engaging his leg and arm muscles to carefully and clearly extend towards pushing this imaginary cart. Often his arms and hands were not at the correct height, or it seemed as though his cart carried no weight. He repeatedly attempted to “successfully” push this imaginary cart despite his failures. His rehearsal time for this scene was regularly flustered as he juggled this disruptive physical work in addition to memorizing and working towards “not failing” at speaking his lines from the scene. In addition to the cart, James also initially failed at miming the imaginary dishes and mugs that were on top of the cart. James was continually wrong in how he would pick up
the imagined “dinner plates” in comparison with the “coffee/tea mugs” and “basket of bread.”

Each item carried a different weight and shape, and he worked hard to extend towards the specificity of these things as he imaginatively moved them from the cart to the table, and at the correct point in the scene. It was through repeatedly failing, risking being ridiculous, that James was able to experiment and move his extensions towards better understanding the nuances of the mimed pieces.

My writing – ‘Tom is Lost’

With this example, I discuss how I, as research-informed playwright, both foolishly/inventively disrupted and playfully extended as part of my writing process by exploring the writing of the scene Tom is Lost. I was involved and participated in Rounds and other theatrical explorations and my writings were informed by these physical, sensory, emotional and imaginative exercises. However, I draw on my writing process to highlight the ways that foolish/inventive disrupting and playful extending are not only about what the physical body does (which is most obvious in exploring the work of the actors), but about all actions the artist-researcher engages in as embodied, imaginative and foolish. When the written scene is performed, the inclusion of the actors’ playful extensions and foolish/inventive disruptions adds a layer of depth to the creative work. My intention is to explore ways I playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted as research-informed playwright through the written words and the structure of the scene.

This scene is between Vera, a woman in her 70s who is in the early stages of dementia, and Tom, her husband of over 40 years, and was one that I wrote (as opposed to being developed through Rounds). Before writing this scene, I discussed with the health researchers how people with dementia and their care partners spoke about how dementia had changed rather than eradicated their relationship – specifically about intimacy and sex. Sometimes this was positive (such as “I forget we just had sex, so we’re doing it all the time!”) to the more difficult (“it can be disorienting, and my wife doesn’t really have the interest and wants more hugs than anything else”). We felt this change in intimacy was important to explore in the play – specifically, we wanted to work through the difficulty of the shift in physical and sexual intimacy that many care partners expressed.

As I sat down to write this scene, truthfully, I was at a loss about how to begin. I do not have dementia. In listening to the stories of others, I wondered if it was presumptuous of me to
write about such intimate loss that I hadn’t experienced. I let this feeling of being lost sit in my
gut for many weeks before attempting to put anything on paper.

As I sat with this, I imagined what I might feel like if my husband did not recognize me.
At this thought, I felt very lost – in many ways I would feel disoriented without my husband’s
recognition. Additionally, I imagined if I had dementia and had moments of not recognizing the
people around me, how disorienting this might be too. Through this imaginative work, I was
disorienting my immediate experience of not having dementia. In echoing study participant
Elise, who says “I don’t think I can understand… but I can imagine,” I imaginatively approached
the experiences of people with dementia and their family members not as a way to finitely know
how a person with dementia feels not recognizing her partner, but to open up possibilities that
might otherwise remain closed; “My imagination call[ed] on the bodily resources I do have to
give me a glimmer of understanding” (Hamington, 2004, p. 74).

I have chosen my husband as a life partner because of how he relates to me, how he sees
me, how he touches me. His aesthetic engagement with me is, in part, how I come to understand
myself. We emotionally, sensorily and physically extend towards each other through the space
of our friendship and as such our bodily horizons impress upon and shape each other. Through
our friendship, our co-habitation, our sexual intimacy, we have directed our actions towards each
other, we have committed, taken a promise towards the future, extending from our bodies as
starting points, from our past histories. We are two others reaching to each other, and through
our reaching we in part become ourselves. My husband’s otherness, or his “‘not me” is
incorporated into [my] body, extending [my] reach” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 115). The way we
extend towards each other, the intention and nature of our actions, both creates the space of our
friendship along which we continue to extend and shape each of us as individuals. Additionally,
as a straight, white, middle class couple, our actions of extending into the space between us are
oriented along particular points of alignment that allow for a normative extension into the world.
Our relationship, as well as both of us as individuals, is shaped by this orientation and
commitment to each other as individuals and our alignment within social/cultural/historical
spaces.

As I imagined what it might be like if my husband didn’t recognize me, my sense of self,
shaped in part by this chosen orientation and commitment towards my husband, was disrupted.
It was this disruption that was so disorienting and made me feel lost, unsure about where to start
from in writing the scene. Ahmed discusses how orientation is about “making the strange
familiar through the extension of bodies” and how “disorientation occurs when that extension fails” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 11). The imagined failure of recognition, a disruption in my husband’s regular extensions towards me, shook my sense of self. Through these imaginings, the tragedy discourse of dementia, as seeing the person with dementia as only filled with loss, became tangible; my imagining of his failed extension towards me through lack of recognition was one of sadness. Through the lack of recognition the person with dementia’s actions and extensions are different, not following with the normal points of alignment of our relationship as well as social/cultural/historical spaces. In an attempt to straighten or re-read this wonky point of contact, these extensions are understood as tragic and filled with loss.

In pondering how to approach writing the scene, feeling lost about where to begin writing became my place to start writing from. My imagined reflections combined with my feelings of disorientation gave me a starting point. I imagined that, not only was Vera lost in her orientation to her husband because of her dementia, but Tom was lost too – he became disoriented by their changing relationship.

The first incarnation of the scene was very short and involved Tom and Vera coming into an embrace – only to have Vera become confused and disoriented, pushing Tom away with fear of not recognizing him. This brings Tom to tears and, when Vera comes back into the present moment and recognizes Tom again, he confesses to her that it is he who is lost. On November 11, 2013, the scene read as such:

**Scene 10 – Tom is lost**

**TOM** Goodnight, my love.

* TOM and VERA come into an embrace. While they are kissing, VERA becomes confused, does not recognize TOM and pushes him away. She is frightened and shocked. TOM is shocked as well, hurt by her rejection and sad to see VERA so frightened. He begins to cry. VERA, coming back into the present moment, notices TOM is crying.*

**VERA** Tom? Tom, what’s wrong?

**TOM** Vera, I’m lost.
They hug each other. Lights.

We played this scene to an audience at a preview presentation in November, 2013. As seen in my hand-written notes from this works-in-progress presentation many, especially care partners and family members, felt it was too intimate a moment, too raw and very dark. Audience members said it was too difficult to watch the loss for Tom as he struggled with the change in their relationship. As a team we agreed we needed to shift the scene. Our intention with the overall play was not to dwell in the tragedy, but to move through it to find hope and new ways of engaging with people with dementia. As playwright I understood that in writing this scene, in playfully extending towards the experiences of persons with dementia and their care partners, I had failed. I gestured towards my imagined understanding of becoming disoriented in living with dementia, as person with dementia and care partner, and my gesture through the words and structure of the scene had not disrupted the tragedy discourse, but reproduced it.

In returning to re-write the scene, again I turned inward and was at a loss about where the hope was in this scene. I deeply explored my own perceptions of dementia and how I was taking on the discourse of tragedy that we were aiming to challenge – how were my own deeply engrained assumptions about dementia shaping the play? In what ways were my imaginings of living with dementia as disorienting contributing to the tragedy discourse and causing further harm? Given that my imaginings of my husband’s lack of recognition were filled with sadness, that the imagined “failed extension” through the lack of recognition was a disruption of our relationship, it was no wonder that the initial scene that I wrote was tragic. I began to imagine where the hope was in this scene and to work towards seeing possibilities of our imagined future relationship. I asked myself – what would I need from my husband if I became disoriented? Or what kind of support or physical touch would I want to provide to my husband if he did not recognize me? How might the imagined lack of recognition not be a failed extension towards the space of our friendship, but a wonky moment that can offer insight? How could the failure of this moment in the lack of recognition, the “losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing,” in fact, hold the potential to “offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 2-3). As I reflected on these assumptions, I contemplated how I might use this process of overturning and imagining possibilities of hope to help me playfully extend differently through a new scene structure and word choices.
The next incarnation of the scene started the same way: with Vera and Tom coming into an embrace, to have Vera push Tom away. Tom again confesses to Vera that he is lost when she comes back into the present moment. But next Vera pushes Tom to explain himself. He repeats a line from earlier in the play, a line that was originally said by a character with dementia: “I am losing track of what I should do, or should not do. It makes it difficult to be steady.” Tom confesses to Vera that he misses how they used to engage with each other - sexually and otherwise. She assures him that he does not need to be steady – not to dwell on the past, or tomorrow, but to be with her as she is now. And, inspired by Leonard Cohen’s poem *Anthem*, she tells him that “cracks are how the light gets in” (1993, p. 373). The scene in the final script is as follows:

**SCENE 10 – Tom is lost**

* TOM and VERA’s living room.  

3 chairs placed together to indicate a couch. The Ensemble sings ‘Vera’s Theme.’

VERA enters and walks downstage, looking out into the audience as if looking out a window. She gently turns towards the chairs and walks towards them. She sits and folds her hands on her lap. TOM enters.

TOM Goodnight, my love.

* TOM kisses VERA and they come into an embrace. While they are kissing, VERA becomes confused, does not recognize TOM and pushes him away. She is frightened and shocked. TOM is shocked as well, hurt by her rejection and sad to see VERA so frightened. He begins to cry. VERA, coming back into the present moment, notices TOM is crying.

VERA Tom. Tom? Tom, what’s wrong?

TOM Vera, I’m lost.

VERA But you are my hero.
TOM  I’m falling apart.

VERA  Why is that?

TOM  I can’t… I shouldn’t…

VERA  It’s OK. I want to hear.

TOM  I’ve lost track of what I should do or should not do. So I come out sometimes wrong.

VERA  Tom…

TOM  It makes it difficult to be steady.

VERA  It’s OK.

TOM  How is this OK?

VERA  It is. I don’t need any more than you. You are my hero.

TOM  But how can I be? We used to, how we used to…

VERA  Don’t dwell on what has passed away.

TOM  And tomorrow?

VERA  Or tomorrow. Don’t dwell on tomorrow.

TOM  I want to be good to you.

VERA  Do not worry about being steady.

TOM  I want to help you.

VERA  There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.

They hug each other.

Prior to writing the scene, I discussed with the health researchers how we were interested to have the direction of the scene, the support for Tom, come from Vera as the person with dementia. We felt it was stronger dramatically and spoke to our goals of critiquing the tragedy discourse that the person with dementia, who disrupts the normative social, cultural, historical line of a straight relationship by not recognizing her husband as he expresses interest in sexual intimacy, also be the person to “offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of
being in the world” (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 2-3). It is Vera who suggests that cracks, as a metaphor for disruption, are what allow us to be in light, as a metaphor for creativity and surprise. It is Vera who suggests that Tom not be steady; that he could fail, unbecome, lose his way, be wrong and ridiculous. That their extensions towards each other through the space of their friendship could still be filled with surprises and the unexpected; but that they must be receptive to that surprise, those moments of not knowing.

The response to this incarnation of the scene through performances was much more hopeful. Audience members, including people with dementia and family members, have told us that, while the scene is still difficult, they appreciated that the guidance in the scene is propelled by Vera, the person with dementia. Audience members have spoken about the importance of being in the present moment with the person with dementia and to follow their lead. Audience members have talked about how each of us has cracks and imperfections as integral to who we are as human beings. Audience members spoke about how the scene (and the play more broadly) left them feeling hopeful.

'The Lobster Trap Scene’ – relational aspects of playfully extending and foolish/inventive disrupting

To build on these examples of how artist-researchers playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted as part of the creation of Cracked, I explore the opening scene of the play which we called The Lobster Trap Scene, specifically the multiple ways that we created and performed it. To place our discussion in context, I have provided the script of the scene from the final incarnation of the script. The script is a written documentation of what the actors did and said in the performance, as well as a description of the set and performance space.

SCENE 1 – Lobster Trap

There are three mismatched chairs in a line on either side of the stage (six in total) facing centre. There are two actors on each side between the chairs, each of them facing up stage.

Three actors stand with their backs to each other in a triangle/circular shape in the upstage left corner of the stage, their arms are in front of their bodies, palms together at chest height. One of the actors makes the sound of a fog horn. They slowly begin to turn in a circle, and as each
actor faces down stage, their arms open, and then slowly close again mimicking a light house.

At the first fog horn, four actors facing upstage move across the stage from stage right and left – their arms ripple like fog. As they move toward centre stage, we begin to hear sounds of the waves, and of birds. Slowly, the actors transform themselves into birds, flap their wings and move into their new positions, transforming themselves into people on a wharf.

Two women are chatting, holding baskets of food. One man, crouched downstage right, attempts to untangle a net, humming to himself. A single woman skins fish down stage left. Upstage centre, three figures, a teenaged ELAINE, her brother JOHN and her father DUNCAN, enter complains about their heads from the night before.

JOHN walks across up stage, and turns down the wharf towards NET DETANGLER.

JOHN (kicking NET DETANGLER gently) Hey, you made it.

NET GUY Oh, get lost.

JOHN laughs, turns up stage and walks back towards ELAINE and DUNCAN.

ELAINE (shouting to the NET DETANGLER) How’s your head?

NET GUY Oh lord, no better for seeing you!

They laugh, and chatter amongst themselves, as JOHN gets on the boat and starts the engine.

DUNCAN OK, the rope there, Elaine.

ELAINE unties the stern of the boat and DUNCAN climbs in the boat.

ELAINE tosses DUNCAN the rope, and hops in too.
ELAINE Yeah! Here you go Dad.

The two women holding baskets of food, and the woman with the bag, melt upstage.

WOMAN 1 (as crossing, to ELAINE) Mornin’.

The man detangling the net, morphs into a bird again, and shifts upstage, as ELAINE, JOHN and DUNCAN in the boat move downstage.

MAN/BIRD Caw! (as ‘flying’ upstage)

The boat stops downstage centre.

JOHN This looks like a good spot.

ELAINE Ready John?

JOHN Ready Elaine. Dad?

DUNCAN Yep.

ELAINE, JOHN and DUNCAN begin to unload mimed lobster traps into the ocean. They begin to sing “Farewell Nova Scotia (traditional)”. The actors standing on stage right and left are making sounds of the wind, waves, the occasional bird and the splashing sounds of the traps being dropped into the ocean.

Slowly, JOHN disappears upstage, while ELAINE and DUNCAN continue to work. Soon, DUNCAN disappears also. As DUNCAN disappears, the other actors form a wall, running from downstage right, to upstage left. As the wall forms, ELAINE’s body language shifts to be frail and slower, and she still mimes dropping lobster traps. She is still singing.

SHEILA, a nurse, enters from upstage right.

SHEILA Mrs. Carter, what are you doing? It’s 3am.
In analyzing how artist-researchers playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted in the creation of this scene, I will first describe how this scene first came to be developed. One of the team’s researchers, Pia Kontos, shared with the artists an excerpt from one of her articles (Kontos & Naglie, 2007), which discusses socially acquired habits of the body and the importance of recognizing and responding positively to these socio-cultural dimensions of selfhood that persist despite even severe dementia. This excerpt is taken from a focus group she conducted with health care providers working with people with dementia in a long term care facility. This health care provider is speaking about her experience witnessing the actions of a person with dementia who was previously a farmer.

“In the middle of the night, 3:00am, he gets up and goes in the middle of the hallway, and he’s doing like this [demonstrating the motions of planting] because he is thinking that he is still a farmer and has to wake up early to plant the rice, or whatever.”

Based on this description, one of the actors Mary Ellen MacLean, who was raised as a child and lived in Nova Scotia for a great part of her adult life, led the team through an improvisation exercise based on lobster fishing. Nova Scotia is one of Canada’s eastern coastal provinces with strong economic, cultural, social and historical ties to the fishing industry. Ultimately this improvisation was honed to become the opening scene for the play. In developing The Lobster Trap Scene, Mary Ellen was not attempting to replicate the example of the farmer’s actions of planting. It was the theoretical argument of Kontos that the physical gestures that this farmer had acquired during his lifetime were still an embodied dimension of his selfhood and as such continued to be expressed, despite cognitive impairment, because of their manifestation in bodily movement and actions; they were part of his “bodily horizon,” allowing him to extend out into the world and be oriented in particular ways (Ahmed, 2006a). Mary Ellen drew on her deep, personal connection to her home, Nova Scotia, and the social, cultural, geographical, economic and work-oriented aspects of that province. Mary Ellen’s embodied experiences and understanding of these aspects of Nova Scotia as part of her bodily horizon became an important part of the research process. We chose to capitalize on her embodied experiences by developing the scene based on lobster fishing, which moved us away from directly translating the original excerpt describing the resident engaged in the motions of planting.
Additional findings shared with the artistic team included an excerpt from a documentary film “Alive Inside” which features Henry, a resident living with Alzheimer’s in a long-term care home. Kontos describes the power of music to support his expression of self. As she writes: “He doesn’t speak, and rarely moves. The personal support worker puts headphones on him attached to an iPod with his favourite music, and with the music Henry begins to shuffle his feet, his folded arms rock back and forth, his face assumes expression, his eyes open wide, and he is totally animated by the music” (Kontos, 2014, p. 107). In the quote below from her interview as part of my study, Mary Ellen discusses how she drew on this example of Henry, as well as the earlier quote from Kontos’ research about the farmer, as the seeds for the scene.

…I think people have an internal dialogue going all the time. It's just that we might edit it differently. We're not allowed to say it out loud. Looking at that tape [of Henry from “Alive Inside”], playing Elaine where she would seemingly not be that able but bringing it back into a memory of being able. In her case, being a fisher with her dad and her brother, doing lobster fishing, so that's there. She might be imagining and doing it all the time but can't do it. I think that was kind of a—that was like a—in terms of visual or transformational, how do you show that memory? I don't know if he [Henry] was doing something with his hand. I can't remember that specifically. It also was coupled with the story of, in this particular scene that I'm talking about that we do in the play, where Elaine is doing an action and then you learn—you see them lobster fishing in the beginning of the play. Then as she gets older and she turns, she goes through the whole scene of doing the lobsters and it's very clear. She's alive and she's out there alive, meaning alive fishing. That's real. Then the transition back into her being in a long-term care facility and doing the same action but, of course, not with as much rigor and vigor and all that…

Those films helped me, seeing that, but the story that really helped me out of the transcripts—and maybe it was just a story that one of the researchers told [Kontos’ research]. The nurses at this long-term care facility were just like, 'Your dad is, like, gettin' up at three and he's doing this action. We don't know what he's doing and it's troubling. He's up. He's not wanting to sleep.” They [family members of the person with dementia] went, "Oh, he's getting the rice fields ready." It'd be at the right time in the morning to be doing that, so the action. That's where that really sparked that whole lobster scene for me. That's drawing from a completely real—you know, real—and making it into a piece of storytelling that is really accessible for everybody.

Mary Ellen discusses how she drew on both the footage of Henry and the quote from Kontos’ research as beginning points to create The Lobster Trap Scene. The scene is based on the theoretical concept of embodied selfhood which holds that socially acquired habits of the body are a fundamental dimension of selfhood. Mary Ellen drew on the participants’ bodies
engaged in actions (the moving and the singing of Henry, as well as the motion of digging for the former farmer) understood that these actions and bodies are environmentally or spatially situated (Henry moving while sitting in his chair in the long term care home, as well as the former farmer moving in the hallway of the long term care home as if planting in the fields at a particular time in the morning). Mary Ellen imagined how this experience for a person with dementia, which is “real” to that person in the moment and “alive,” might be transformed into the dramatic form of the scene. This transformation of the data into dramatic form is based on the need to engage audiences.

Further to that, Mary Ellen discusses how she allowed the exploration of a person’s “internal dialogue” to inform the scene’s creation; meaning that the way that a person with dementia might not be able to express herself out loud informed the creation and structure of the scene. Mary Ellen wanted to “bring [the scene] back into a memory of being able” even though the character with dementia might not actually be able in the present moment as an elder. Through the scene, Mary Ellen aimed to highlight the juxtaposition between the character of Elaine’s abilities and imaginings; how Elaine, in the moment with the lobster traps, might be “imagining and doing it all the time” within her own body as part of her experiences with dementia, as well as how Elaine “can’t do it,” in that she is living in a long term care facility with dementia and no longer works with her father and brother on a fishing boat. In structuring the scene, Mary Ellen capitalized on this imagining/doing as a way to “show that memory” of lobster fishing; rather than describing through words or discussing the concept, the memory of being able is “shown” through the actions of the character and the structure of the scene.

Elaine’s imagining and doing of the lobster fishing while living with dementia is not what happened only in the past or in her mind; it is also happening in the now moment for Elaine in her body, living in a long term care home. These previous experiences of lobster fishing are a part of her bodily horizon and are expressed through her movements and gestures. The structure of the scene, as moving from a ‘real’ moment of lobster fishing as a socially acquired habit of Elaine’s body to a ‘real’ moment of being in a long term care home, playfully extends towards a person living with dementia as being embodied, as well as socially, culturally and historically situated.

The creation of The Lobster Trap Scene relies heavily on the ensemble of actors’ relational gestural enactment of embodied and imaginative understandings. For example, in the opening moment of the scene the actors engaged their bodies to construct the light house through
the movement of their arms and the sound of the fog horn made by one of the actors. By imagining what we knew from our own experiences of lighthouses, how the top of the lighthouse rotates around and flashes a light to warn ships at sea, as well as some of us having been in their physical presence, we were able to collectively construct, or extend towards, an imaginary lighthouse using only three actors’ bodies and their actions, as movement of their arms and one voice. Mary Ellen, Greg and James stand together, arms extended out at chest height, palms together with the backs of their hands facing the ceiling and floor. They slowly glide their feet along the floor under their hips, toes in and out, knees slightly bent: this allows them to glide around in a circle. As they move in this circle, each actor comes to be in the downstage position, facing the audience; in this position, the actor slowly opens her straight arms with the top hand reaching just above her head and the bottom moving down past her midsection. These movements, however, do not happen in isolation. What fills the picture of the imaginary lighthouse is how the movements happen relationally. These movements of turning in a circle and lifting arms are not linear acts—it is not only about what each of these bodies have done before, or what it is doing in the present now moment, but also how the movements are tracing to the future and how the audience anticipates what might come next (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 43). The movements are implicated in time and space; the actors must time their movements to be coordinated with each other, and space their movements to also be aligned. Here the empty performance space is disrupted in that, by the actors playfully extending into it with their movements and voices, the space moves beyond the empty rehearsal hall or performance space and is imagined and activated as an ocean coast.

Similarly, we used the actors’ bodies and actions, as their movements and voices, to playfully extend towards being birds on the ocean. Actors as human beings are, of course, not birds, but rather in the creation of this research-informed performed moment, they playfully extend towards being a bird by recalling experiences of birds, of observing the actions of birds (how they walk, fly, sounds they make) and imagining what that might be like in their own bodies as actors. This imagining is not in the mind of the actor, but takes place in what they experimentally do in and with their bodies; how Jenny lifts her head as her arms lift and move away from her torso and shoulders, or how Elise brings her forearms above her shoulders towards her ears and flicks her fingers upwards towards the ceiling. The actors playfully extend towards that embodied, imagined understanding of birds, through their movements of their arms, how their legs propel them forward differently from when they had imaginatively enacted fog
moments before, their voices with the sound of *caw*, in space and time and in relation to each other.

This relational extending among artist-researchers fully creates the scene through detailed playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting of each individual artist-researcher. As an example of this detailed work, I will look closely at the moment when Mary Ellen as Elaine changes from being a teenager, young and able-bodied, working with her father and brother, into being an elder Elaine living in a long term care home (drawing on video footage from our workshops in September 2012 and June 2013). In the moments leading up to this change in her physicality, Elaine is working as a teenager with her father and brother dropping imaginary, mimed lobster traps from a boat into the ocean: she bends her knees deeply, she lunges forward on one leg as she drops the mimed lobster trap, she engages her arm muscles anticipating the imagined weight of the lobster trap that she lifts with her brother and/or father, her arm freely extends beyond her body as the imagined trap drops into the moving water and drifts behind the imaginary boat. In the moment when she changes her physicality to become an elder Elaine, Mary Ellen bends her knees less, she does not lunge, her feet take smaller more tentative steps, her head is slightly stooped from her neck and shoulders rather than resting erect upon her spine, her arms extend less as she drops the imagined, mimed traps.

This change in Mary Ellen’s physicality as Elaine, the way she is playfully extending and foolishly disrupting, is significant. It is because of these physical changes that there is a change in how audiences come to engage with the story, the character of Elaine and the imagined space; in other words, there is a change in the aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience members. Mary Ellen was working from the assumption that audience members participate in this imaginative work and “becom[e] an accomplice to the action” (Brook, 1993, p. 32) of the play by imagining and accepting that Elaine and her brother and father are on a boat on the ocean based on the movement, voices and language of the actors. By disrupting Elaine’s bodily horizon, or doing the character’s bodily horizon differently, in how her body moves differently from the younger to elder Elaine, Mary Ellen disrupts audience expectations of what was being traced relationally through the moving, timing and spacing of the playful extending. In other words what her body was doing as the younger Elaine and the way it was moving, as dropping imagined, mimed lobster traps with strength and ease, was tracing back and forth relationally in movement, time and space (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 42) – what was done before, and what is done in the present moment also traced to the future moment with potentiality of what
might come. This relational, playful extending is disrupted as Mary Ellen changes her physicality to be frailer. The shift in moving, timing and spacing of Mary Ellen’s Elaine from younger to elder provides a point of analysis as a “wonky moment” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 562), as Elaine as a young person dropping lobster traps with her father and brother. With this “wonky moment” a new crack of light is shed on Elaine’s experience of dementia as one that is embodied, as well within social/cultural/historical space, rather than seemingly disjointed, “demented,” and tragic. In this way, this “wonky moment” aligns with the research team’s original pedagogical goals for the production: to inspire alternative ways of seeing persons with dementia, to instill the importance of maintaining strong relationships with them, and to reinforce the imperative for good ethical care.

It should also be noted that Mary Ellen is not disrupting and extending in isolation – it is her body in relation to the other people within the empty performance space that completes the playful extending as well as allows the disruption. The “wonky moment” does not only take place in Mary Ellen’s playful extending, but also with how the other actors are also playfully extending, how they are gesturally enacting embodied, imaginative understandings. The moment of Mary Ellen shifting Elaine’s physicality from younger to elder is more fully realized in part because the other actors have moved away from her.

It is important to also explore how Mary Ellen came to playfully extend into the character of Elaine in the ways that she did. In this excerpt from our interview together she discusses how she played the differing ages of Elaine throughout the play, including being a senior in her mid-70s (Mary Ellen was in her late 40s when we created Cracked).

I like also to use my skill as an actor and as a mover. How can you actually convey an older person in this body (points to chest) and make it believable for the audience? … …

I thought of her as being a fisher, very strong… It's labor. It's physical labor. How that affects you as a man or a woman. What your muscles (shakes head loosely) are like as a woman as opposed to a man. I do think of all those things. How healthy (hands lift off legs, left hand sweeps in front of body) was she throughout her whole life? When she does end up in a long-term care facility as an older person, how much mobility does she actually have? I did think about that. Well, if she was out there in the cold weather fishing (draws fingers of left hand together) — her joints — how long did she do it for? When did she stop doing it? What did she do after that? What climate did she live — work in? When I’m thinking… (hands up in front of face, palms to face) I’m thinking of those things all the time (fingers together, move hands in front of face back and forth, side to side), so the internal dialogue doesn't shut up. It's always affecting me (shifts left
shoulder down, shifts torso to side. "Oh, yeah, right. If she was cold (hands crossed at chest, looks slightly to left and up, squints face/eyes), she'd probably wanna be warm" (laughs).

...What's their sadness doing? (right hand to side of left cheek) How is that landing (drop hand weighted, into the air as if catching a ball) on their body, depressed. You don't know. If they are unable to articulate it with words, the only thing they have is to speak it through their body (roll shoulders forward, open hands in lap towards face, look to hands). Most people are not listening to that. Thinking about that with Elaine, all of those signals and I go back to the research too. That beautiful story, sad but beautiful, of the woman [a resident in a long term care home] having a bib put on her [by a health care provider who will assist feeding her] (hands to chest, fingers to sternum, move fingers away from sternum towards armpits in a square shape), which must be so weird for adults, "Putting a bib on me, really? (moves eyes up and to the left, as in looking at someone who has just put a bib on her)" Having a bib put on her and then wanting to get the thing [from under her bib, increasingly more agitated] and that they couldn't figure out what it was (scrunches nose, furrows brow, fingers tugging at shirt collar) and they're kind of, "Stop that. (drop hands, as if batting at someone’s arms)" Stop that.

Then finally one of her family members said, "She wants her pearls to be on the outside of her apron (fingers to sternum, shifts fingers as if placing a necklace) because she was always well-dressed and that would just not be correct (left hand flat on chest/sternum) if it was all tucked in there." Those things.

Mary Ellen discusses how it is her imaginings of the relationship between the body of the older person, as Elaine, and her own body as a performer: “how can you actually convey an older person in this body (as she points to her chest)?” She discusses the kinds of physical details she explored for Elaine such as being a fisher, what your muscles are like as a woman as opposed to a man, how much mobility Elaine had as an older person in a long term care home, how the cold might have affected her joints over a period of time, how Elaine’s sadness and emotions are in relation to her physical body.

In addition to asking questions of her character’s personal history, previous work, injuries, emotional stresses, sadness, and how all of these things come to be in relation to the character’s body and impress upon her body over time, Mary Ellen drew on her senses as a way to imagine and relate. As an example, in her interview she spoke about the cold in the moment of the scene, and wanting to be warm. She imagined the effect that cold might have on Elaine physically, her joints and bones; and, in the moment of the interview, she sensorily and physically explored the imagined concept of being cold on a boat off the coast of Nova Scotia,
by crossing her arms, rubbing her upper arms, squinting her face. In the interview, the words alone describing the experience of being cold are not sufficient; Mary Ellen physically experiments with the imagined idea through her gestural enactment of her embodied understanding of being cold. In this way, she playfully extends towards the experience of being cold on a boat, foolishly disrupts her own bodily horizon in the interview as not cold, and moves towards inventively disrupting the space of our interview.

Video footage of rehearsals and performances further illustrates the ways Mary Ellen playfully extended and foolishly/inventively disrupted towards this moment of being cold on a boat. At the moment when Mary Ellen as Elaine steps onto the imagined boat in at the pier she shifts her weight from leg to leg, indicating that the surface she is standing on is not stable as was the pier. The three actors begin to move together in a line away from the original spot where they were standing; Mary Ellen bends over, swings her arms and curls her fingers as if grabbing a large piece of rope. She engages her muscles as if she is lifting and adjusting this imagined rope. While she does this she shifts her feet from side to side to glide her body in space and in time with the other actors indicating that the boat is moving and turning. As she stands up, she tucks her hands under her arm pits, crossing her arms, her shoulders hunch forward and move towards her ears, all the while moving her feet to keep in line with the other actors. She begins to sway her body as if adjusting to more turbulent waves under the boat. These extensions towards the imagined boat, the imagined rope, the imagined water underneath, disrupt her own bodily horizon and her immediate embodied experience of being in an empty performance space. The actual rehearsal and performance spaces are not cold, nor is there water underfoot. Her gestures and movements disrupt the space to become an imagined boat off the coast of Nova Scotia, inviting audience members to participate in the experience of the performance. In these ways, Mary Ellen gesturally enacts her embodied, imagined understanding of being cold and on a boat on the ocean as a way to playfully extend, and the playful extending is a disruption of space and her bodily horizon.

However, this enactment on Mary Ellen’s part in the performance did not occur without failures or being wrong in rehearsal with fellow artist-researchers. As an example, I draw on footage from our June 2013 in-studio workshop period of Mary Ellen working with her fellow artist-researchers to extend towards the creation of the imaginary boat. Relying on me as director, as an external “out-side eye” to provide on-going feedback about the extensions and gestures they were experimenting with, Mary Ellen and the other two artist-researchers worked
together on the “spacing” and “timing” of the imaginary boat and dropping of the lobster traps. As they entered the boat from the imaginary pier, they each put their hand on the side of the imaginary side of the boat at different heights, each swung their legs, as if climbing on the boat, at different heights, one seemingly putting his leg through the side of the boat altogether. Once on the imaginary boat, they worked to shift their feet in such a way to glide together in a line indicating the movement of the boat on water. They had to space themselves consistently as they moved, they had to shift their feet and sway their upper bodies in relation to each other to indicate they were on the same boat on the same ocean. Often one of the actors, as he turned, had a difficult time staying in line with the others while simultaneously shifting his feet and swaying his body to indicate turbulent waters. In this way, this actor “failed” in his extension towards the imagined, moving boat; while he was disrupting his own bodily horizon through these imaginings and actions, as he was not actually on a boat on the cold ocean, he was not “successful” in his miming of these things in relation to the other actors’ actions. The “failure” was because his use of space and time were not aligned with the others to be believable for an audience. Through repeated extensions and commitments towards the imaginary boat, allowing themselves “to fail while remaining always alert, ready and willing to try” (Salverson, 2006, p. 155), the three actors worked with each other in a “dance of attention” in that they attended to each other’s presence and movements within space and time as a kind of analysis, working towards successful relational, playful extending.

In returning to Mary Ellen’s quote, she also discusses how she continued to return to the original research findings throughout her creative process; the research findings grounded her development of the character. Drawing on research findings, Mary Ellen spoke about relating to the frustrations a person with dementia would experience such as those of the woman who struggled to display her pearls; a person with dementia who might be “unable to articulate it [what she is experiencing] with words, [when] the only thing they have is to speak it through their body.” The play is structured such that this Lobster Trap Scene is revisited about half way through the play; the ensemble of actors stand in the same lines to indicate walls and the nurse Sheila’s line is repeated: “Mrs. Carter, it’s 3am, what are you doing?” This repetition is intended to bring audience members to recall the original Lobster Trap Scene. What is seen in the new scene is how the character of Elaine responds to Sheila’s line, “it’s 3am, what are you doing?,” interrupting her embodied experience of lobster fishing with her dad and brother. Sheila tells Elaine that it is time to return to bed – and when she touches her, Elaine jumps, turns quickly and
responds with an agitated “who are you?” With the interruption of her embodied experience of lobster fishing as a teenager in that performed moment, Elaine’s perception of time and space has been disrupted and disoriented. With the disruption, her agitation escalates and she shifts her body quickly back and forth, looking around wildly with her face scrunched in confusion. Here Mary Ellen as the artist-researcher is not directly translating the story of the woman with the string of pearls wanting to place her necklace over her bib, but rather she draws on the imagined feelings. She relates to the story of the woman with the pearls, imagines her own projected frustration of not being able to articulate through words beyond her immediate experience as someone without dementia, and enacts that embodied, imagined understanding through her movements and gestures.

Summary
By drawing on several exemplars from my data I have highlighted the ways that artist-researchers engage in particular ways of doing things, or modes of practice, in that they playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt throughout their creative process. I have discussed how artist-researchers playfully extend in multiple ways, including the ways they move, such as their posture and physical gestures, their word choices, use of metaphor, structuring of a scene, working relationally, among others. In this way, playfully extending is not only about what the physical body does, but about all actions extending from an artist-researcher’s bodily horizon. These actions as extensions experimentally take place between the bodily horizon of the artist-researcher and that of the original, imagined research participant. It is through playful extending that the artist-researcher comes to better attend to her own bodily horizon and disrupt it throughout the creative process, vulnerably, bravely and with a willingness to be ridiculous and wrong. However, with the focus on the ways that artist-researchers engage relationally among each other and researcher participants, what was only peripherally addressed was how artist-researchers do these things for their audiences. In the next chapter, I will more fully explore the ways that artist-researchers considered or imagined audience members as part of the future performance event itself, and how these imaginings informed the creative process.

6. Considering audiences
As artist-researchers we engage in our work so that, together with our audiences, we can sensorily, emotionally, actively, imaginatively explore particular ideas/concepts and experiences,
in order to understand them anew or differently. As was touched on in Chapter 5, the reason artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt is for their audience. While Chapter 5 focuses on the relational process among artist-researchers in extending towards research findings and in crafting the play, this chapter focuses on the ways audience members are considered by artist-researchers through the creative process and how those considerations influence the process. To be clear, this study does not include an exploration of the ways audience members themselves engage with the performance event; to have collected data on the ways audience members engaged with the play would have moved beyond the scope of this study. Rather, I explicate the ways artist-researchers imagine audience members might engage with the play in the future and the ways those conceptions informed the creative process. As such, I first draw on participants’ own words to describe the ways audiences are considered or conceived of, and then I draw on two examples from the play’s development process to highlight the ways we shifted the aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience, to engage audience members with the play differently. I will specifically draw attention to how artist-researchers create the research-informed play with the anticipation (not the actuality) that audience members will themselves playfully extend towards the performance; playful extending on the part of audience members holds the potential to lead to a foolish disruption of their bodily horizon and move into newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces beyond the performance event itself. Audience members are conceived by artist-researchers to hold the potential to playfully extend because it is assumed they are actively part of the co-construction of the project in the moment of the performance.

Study participants spoke not of knowing precisely what their audiences would experience through the performance, but rather of how they hoped audience members would engage with the research-informed play and how the play might challenge assumptions.

“People want to participate.” Elise

This, expressed by Elise in our interview, is an important assumption artist-researchers make about their audiences when creating research-informed theatre. All of the study participants I interviewed discussed in different ways how, not only are they working from this assumption of desired and anticipated participation on the part of audience members, but how the artist-researchers’ creative work should support that involvement. Audience members are not
assumed to be passive recipients of the “content” or ideas conveyed in the theatre production. Rather they are implicated as embodied, imaginative participants with the potential for action and change. This is not to say that artist-researchers know how audience members will engage during the performance event itself; rather study participants spoke of how they conceived of an open-ended experience they intended for their audiences, as playfully extending towards the performance, and how their creative process as artist-researchers was influenced by those assumptions.

In considering audience members and their involvement in the play, study participants also discussed how they worked to not be dictated or ruled by audience members desires through the creation process. They spoke about the importance of balancing the audience’s needs as embodied and imaginative, with the needs of the story (based on research), as well as the importance of stretching and challenging expectations and perceptions, or inviting audience members to become foolishly disrupted through their engagement with the play. If audience members’ appetites are easily satiated or directly catered to, the assumption is that there is less potential for them to be active participants in the performance, thereby allowing them to rest within the passive comfort of normative assumptions. Working relationally with each other allows artist-researchers to assess their playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting in the moment of creation; however, it is through moving into the performance event itself that the ensemble is able to more fully understand whether and how that extending and disrupting is ‘working’ by the way audience members “(re)act” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8). The research-informed play ‘works’ when audience members come to playfully extend towards the play, which holds the potential for them to also become foolishly disrupted. It is for these reasons that works-in-progress presentations are vitally important as part of any creative process for research-informed theatre; works-in-progress presentations are an opportunity for artist-researchers to invite a small audience into rehearsal to witness selected segments of the in-progress play.

It is anticipated that audience members reciprocally commit to the imaginative, emotional, sensory experiences through the play; in these ways “all involved are creating something together, in jointly constructing ways of seeing other possibilities” (Thrift, 2007, p. 148). As Jenny says:

…a piece like this can, you run the risk of being preachy. Right? And I wanted it, I wanted there to be many access points so people could just be in it and not feel like, you know, we were trying to tell them differently. I wanted them to experience it with the characters. Like, feel the growth instead of being told this is how you can grow.
By using the word “experience” to describe how she hopes audience members will engage with the performance, Jenny indicates that she anticipates audience members will participate in the performance with their own senses, emotions and imaginations, or playfully extend. Like the other study participants in their interviews, she discusses how it is what you do as the artist-researcher, such as by providing many access points including different characters, that audience members can “feel the growth” of the story, rather than “being told this is how [they] can grow” or engaged in change solely through intellectual means. I would suggest that this experience of growth through the story opens the potential for audience members to have insight into “what it means to move into another space” (Greene, 2001, p. 71, emphasis added), to see possibilities of acting or engaging differently, or foolishly disrupting their own bodily horizon and invent social/cultural/historical space anew.

In the performed moment, it is assumed that the aesthetic experience through the aesthetic framework, or the relationship between stage-action (executed by performers) and audience members, is a way of being in relation or “encountering another person” (Greene, 2001, p. 70). Artist-researchers create with the assumption that audience members come to engage with and experience the live performance event in great part by what artist-researchers do in the performance, or the ways they playfully extend and foolishly disrupt. Whether there is aesthetic closeness or distance, it is anticipated that there is an “engaging in reciprocity, exchanging, replying, giving back uniquely one to the other” and as such “there must be a presentness, a being there” as part of that encounter (Greene, 2001, p. 70). Audience members then, in their “presentness,” or presence, hold the potential to come to the performance encounter in the now moment (Manning & Massumi, 2014). With this presence, audience members are understood to offer their own attention, a reaching out, and as Greene suggests, “a reaching out to become different” (2001, p. 70). She addresses this reaching out to become different as a kind of sensing – sensing more ways to express yourself, to let your imagination open up, to experiment with things otherwise, to “open windows in the ordinary and banal” (2001, p. 70). By sensing as reaching out, it is assumed the experience of audience members to open these windows of possibility and attending to difference will be an embodied engagement. Audience members bring their bodies to the performance event, as they are physically in the presence of the performers in physical space, and as they reach out through their senses (and I would extend Greene to include their emotions). It is expected that they additionally imagine beyond their own
immediate experience of witnessing the production, of sitting in the audience, to relate to the story and the experiences of the characters; in other words, they “believe and not… believe at one and the same time” (Jackson, 2007, p. 204). Greene discusses the importance of this relational, sensing, imaginative presence so audience members hold the possibility “to move into another space” (2001, p. 71, emphasis added).

Through the frame of the play where the aesthetic experience occurs, audience members hold the potential to playfully extend, become foolishly disrupted and imaginatively re-invent space within and beyond the performance itself. Artist-researchers work from the position that audience members will actively and imaginatively draw on, but move past their own embodiment as a starting point to relate to the experiences of others in the performance. Unlike artist-researchers, audience members do not actually gesture, in that they do not physically move differently during the performance, they do not speak words, etc. However, they imaginatively, emotionally, sensorily extend or commit towards the gestures of the actors on stage from the starting point of their own bodily horizon. During the creative process, artist-researchers assume audience members will playfully extend as part of the performance event itself; audience members will attend to the relationship between their own embodiment as a starting point and the experiences of other people, as an amalgam of the actors before them and the experiences of research participants upon which the story is based. In this way artist-researchers assume audience members hold the potential to commit to the line of thought that is the research-based performance.

Artist-researchers also work from the assumption that audience members hold the potential to become foolishly disrupted during the performance and, as an extension of this, “to move into” (Greene, 2001, p. 71) newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces through and beyond the performance event itself. If disrupting is a way of “inhabiting the world at the point in which things fleet” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 172) then for audience members to be disrupted means that the way they inhabit the world fleets or shifts. As discussed in Chapter 5, disruptions take place at transient moments of failure to extend the normative. For audience members who become foolishly disrupted, there is a moment of failure, of being undone, of recognizing not knowing, of feeling lost when your own normative extension into the world becomes disrupted. There is the potential with this foolish disruption, being vulnerable with feelings of ridiculousness, for audience members to imagine themselves and their actions differently. Through foolish disruptions audience members hold the potential to attend to and understand
differently, in order to move towards a deeper understanding of the relationship between their own bodily horizon and those of other people. As part of this disruption and imagining, audience members can envision newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces beyond the performance event. With their disrupted bodily horizon, audience members hold the potential to extend or move into those re-invented spaces differently.

With these assumptions of the ways that audience members playfully extend and foolishly/inventively become disrupted, artist-researchers then do not only playfully extend towards the research findings, they also playfully extend towards audience members in the performed moment. They additionally consider these assumptions about the way audience members might engage with the performance as part of the creative process. These assumptions require openness and playfulness as we extend or commit to our story, as the research-informed play. In this way, the artist-researcher approaches the playful extending foolishly, with a willingness to fail, as a way to invite audience members into the performance event with similar vulnerability.

**Conceptualizations of audience members’ presence**

In discussing audience members, study participants focused on how future audiences might engage with the play or the kind of experience they hoped their audiences would encounter. Specifically, participants discussed how they wanted their audiences to “lean towards the story” (Mary Ellen), “be the 8th character [in our ensemble for *Cracked*]” (James), “be transported to a magical world” (Elise). These perspectives suggest artist-researchers assume audience members would be deeply implicated in the process of the performance event itself as participants, or extend themselves as part their aesthetic relationship to the play, supported by what artist-researchers do in the performance. Here Mary Ellen highlights that she did not reflect on who might be in our audiences or the specific experience she anticipates they will encounter, instead focusing more on an imagined experience audience members might be engaged with based on what the ensemble creates.

I think I always think of the audience. I think of, "Oh, what would that be like to watch?" [in creating a scene]… I always see it from, "Well, what would that be like to watch that?" In terms of who specifically is watching it, I didn't really—I just thought “would this be enjoyable to watch or will this be something people can follow?” That's what I think this work, all this physical work is really—there's something very exciting about it because you create everything out of nothing and out of these bodies and out of
our imaginations. If the seven of us are truly in the mindset of that place, everyone sees it. That's what I think is so magical.

Mary Ellen discusses how she draws on her own perspective and understands herself to be a kind of ‘first audience,’ reflecting on “what would that be like to watch.” She draws on her own understanding of what an audience member’s experience might be of this particular play or this particular performed moment being created. She further discusses how it is because of what we are doing as artist-researchers, “out of these bodies and out of our imagination,” the ways we extend and disrupt, that allows the creation to happen. If the whole ensemble of artist-researchers are committed in this way to the creation and performance of a particular moment, “everyone sees that” including audience members. Mary Ellen implicates herself in the creation process through her body, her imagination and also as ‘first audience’ by asking if “this will be enjoyable to watch or follow”. In creating the research-informed play she playfully extends herself towards an imagined experience of the intended audience. She additionally imaginatively draws on her own embodied experiences of being an audience member to imagine what the experience of unknown future audience members might be with this scene in creation. This embodied, imaginative (and I would extend Mary Ellen further to also include active) work of the artist-researcher is what invites audience members to “becom[e] an accomplice to the action [of the play]” and be engaged participants (Brook, 1993, p. 32).

James discusses how he considers audience members as the “8th character” thus completing the performance process.

Because they are, their reaction is basically, you know in our case there are 7 people in the show, so they’re kind of like the 8th character. They’re not a character, but they’re an integral part of the process because their reaction, what they’re, you know you hear their laughter, their, you, you may not necessarily, I don’t tend to kind of look at them specifically… but I am intensely aware of their presence. And what their reactions are. So that, I mean it’s a difficult thing to kind of put your finger on because it’s sort of this living, breathing entity that you, that you’re absorbing as you’re going along.

In the moment of the performance, James is aware of the audience’s “presence” as being in the now moment with the performers in the same physical space. As part of his awareness of their presence, he is intently aware of their “reactions,” or “(re)actions” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8) and the way their responses are oriented to the performance; audience members responses are a part of the way they playfully extend. The actions as part of their reactions, their laughter, their
stillness, focused attention (or even their distracted actions of looking at their watches or
glancing at the ceiling) are the ways that audience members playfully extend themselves (or not)
and engage (or not) in the performance. James “absorbs” these reactions, their presence, and
these things inform or shift how he moves ahead with the performance. However, moments after
saying this, James also acknowledges that as attentive as he is to the presence and reactions of
the audience members, he states that “I don’t let the audience dictate what I do.” His shifting
response to the audience members’ reaction, as part of their playful extending, is more of a subtle
impression made upon him as he engages in his own extending and disruptive work, rather than
veering him in a particular direction off course from the story being told (based on research), or
how his extending/disrupting has been refined through rehearsal. As he says:

…it is more a question of you can feel the weight of their reaction, either a sort of
lightening or something deeper, heavier, if it’s something…. In this show, in *Cracked*
there’s a lot of very poignant, serious moments, there’s also a lot of humour too, so it’s, it
changes and their reaction, the audience’s reaction, you feel that, you kind of take it on
but not in a, not in a sort of ‘oh you laughed at that so now I’m going to try and make you
laugh harder’.

While James is speaking about the artist-audience member relationship in the performance event
itself, I draw on this excerpt to highlight the relational, participatory assumptions of the entire
process of performance, including both creation and performance.

These assumptions of the performance itself on the part of artist-researchers influence the
creation of the play. Mary Ellen further discusses the relationship between artist-researcher and
audience member in the moment of the performance itself and what that means for the ways
artist-researchers engage in the creation of the research-informed play. Specifically, she
discusses playing an elder when she herself is middle-aged.

Just as, playing an older person or a younger, I think that that’s the magic of your
imagination and what you can agree to as a performer and an audience. An audience is
very willing to agree. “Okay, we’re going to do it this way? Okay.” Again, they just
want the story. I keep going back to that. It’s like, “You wanna tell the story that way?
Great, I’m in. You wanna tell it like that? Okay, I’m in there.” It’s up to you as the
creators, performers, to say, “This is how we’re gonna tell the story.”

Like James, Mary Ellen also refers to the significance of the relational aspect of performer-
audience member experience in the performed moment. The imagination is central in how the
performance takes place, how audience members engage with the play and how the artist-
researchers craft their work. Engaging the imagination offers “new vantage points on the world” (Greene, 2001, p. 11) and can allow audience members to make the performance their own and participate; the audience’s imaginative participation is in part what allows the performance to continually become what it is (Greene, 2001, p. 118). In this way, audience members “agree” or commit to the performance and participate in it. An integral part of the artist-researcher’s work is to set the ground rules during creation, or to say “This is how we’re gonna tell the story”; to set up the embodied, imaginative, foolish space so audience members are able to engage and participate in, or extend towards, the performance event itself. Later in her interview, Mary Ellen continues to discuss how the artist-researcher crafts her performance with the intention that audience members be active and attentive through their imaginative, physical presence:

It’s fun. I think it’s an important part of everything. Even if it’s an intense topic and play, the fun of it would be the aliveness that there’s something going on for your audience, you want them leaning towards the story.”

This language Mary Ellen uses, of “leaning towards the story,” clearly indicates a desired extension towards the stage-action on the part of the audience. Her words indicate a desire for audience members to be actively, imaginatively and physically engaged. She discusses how there’s an “aliveness,” and this aliveness is “fun,” and gives the audience something to lean towards or commit to. Later in her interview Mary Ellen returns to use similar language of the audience’s participation. In this next quote, she links the artist-researcher’s detailed work to the engagement of audience members to “feel,” sense, and to be present:

The audience totally feels [the detail you attend to as a performer]. Whether they can say, “well, the hip was more-.” It’s not that but they know something’s going on, and that’s what makes them lean forward for the story.

It is anticipated that audience members sense the body of the performer, as an artist-researcher, and the details of her body, such as her hips, and how she attends to the physical details in her work. Even if they are not able to articulate their experience with words or hone in on the specific details (“well, the hip was more-“), Mary Ellen expects that audience members “know something’s going on.” I would suggest this “something” Mary Ellen discusses is the audience members sensing, attending to difference through the aesthetic relationship between Mary Ellen’s actions and gestures and their experiences as audience members. Audience members hold the potential to observe, reach out with their senses and imagine, attending with “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 2001). It is this “something,” of the analytic work of the artist-researchers,
that invites audience members to attend to the performance in this way and encourages them to “lean forward for the story,” or playfully extend. James echoes these ideas of detailed attention of the artist-researcher:

…if I believe it, you know I think I said this at the beginning, if I believe it then the audience will believe it. I firmly believe that. That you know, if I approach it as honestly as I possibly can then that will translate to an audience.

James discusses how he has to “believe,” or imaginatively commit to the creation of the work, in order for audiences to “believe” (or imaginatively commit) to the performance as well. As discussed in Chapter 5, he must playfully extend himself towards the character’s bodily horizon, as gestural enactments of his embodied, imaginative understanding of that character based on research findings. Elise similarly discusses the notion of belief and its importance for audience participation: “If you believe everything that you’re being told [as an audience member], you, you get to be transported to a magical world.”

James’ words, “if I approach [the work] as honestly as I possibly can,” resonate with the notion of truth discussed by all participants, including me. Across the interviews words such as authentic, truth and honesty were continually referenced. While there has been a great deal of scholarly literature critiquing the notion of truth as a single attainable concrete concept and arguing for truths as multiple and multi-layered, I aim to focus here on what study participants were referring to when using this language in relation to their own investigative work and what this means for how audience members are conceived of throughout the creative process. The assumption for these artist-researchers was that these truth(s) being investigated through creation and the performance event itself were the very things that audience members would playfully extend towards.

Participants spoke in different ways about what they felt truth was as part of research-informed theatre, or when their exploratory and performative work was honest. When pressed, participants often struggled to define what they meant by these words indicating implicit assumptions about the nature of truth. Study participants referred to truth, honesty and authenticity as: “not forcing,” “not making assumptions,” “working from impulse,” “sensing what something feels like,” “putting what you observe into your body,” “being believable,” “touching people,” “stories as being profound and beautiful,” “being exposed,” “being in the present moment,” “not trying [intellectually] or being clever,” “just being”. Elise describes her understanding of “truth” in the most succinct way:
The truth, and the words, the actions, the emotions, the way your body moves, the way you hear things, the way you smell things, see things, I think it’s all about digging down just to find the actual truth of it.

Here Elise implicates bodies, senses, actions/movement, and emotions as part of what artist-researchers are “digging down to find” or investigating through their work. The artist-researcher, she attests, works to “find the actual truth of it” as active, emotional, embodied, sensory. In comparing Elise’s comments with the language of the other artist-researchers, one begins to glean the importance of the body. These notions discussed by participants - the importance of being present or in the now moment, not being clever (as residing more in cognition), not making (intellectual) assumptions, and the relationship between what you sense (as observing and touching external to you) and your own body - are aligned with feminist critiques of psychological realist approaches to acting and theatre making. Psychological realism as part of theatre creation focuses on representing stereotypes and uncritically embodying roles as prescribed by dominant cultural norms (Magnat, 2013, pp. 5-6), rather than physically, sensorily, emotionally, actively and foolishly challenging actual and perceived assumptions and roles. Additionally, the relational aspect of what is being investigated through research-informed theatre becomes apparent through comments such as “being believable,” as it is not only what you do, but that your audience believes you. The relational aspect of how participants discussed their creative work is essential to understanding why they do it: to imaginatively, emotionally, sensorily, foolishly engage audience members.

It is these understandings of truth that artist-researchers are anticipating audience members will playfully extend towards. The relational experience between the embodied, imaginative, gestural work of the artist-researcher and the intended playful extending of audience members holds a kind of fluidity as participants described. However, study participants were very clear about the importance of tension between considering in the creative process how audience members might commit to the performance itself, or playfully extend, and being dictated by normative assumptions or expectations of the play. This tension is mediated by what the research-informed play needs, emerging out of research findings, in order for audience members to both playfully extend towards the performance and also be foolishly disrupted. Mary Ellen discusses this tension well:

I do have trust in [what the ensemble of artist-researchers is creating together] but I also do value the audience. Like I said, otherwise why are we doing any of this? We need
them. They're part of what we're doing. You don't base it entirely on their reaction but it certainly informs me. When we'd have the question and answers afterwards [at works-in-progress presentations], those were always useful as well in part of the process because you also have to glean what's—some people will get really into, "Well what I think you should do—" "You know what would be funny, la la la la." It's like, "Great." Or, "I thought that was lovely." This can all be very ego-padding but it's like, what really is okay? You kinda go, "Okay, what's helping the story."

Mary Ellen returns to this notion of how she draws on herself as ‘first audience’ and also refers to the entire creative ensemble in this way: attending to “what moves me or what moves the ensemble.” She acknowledges this reference to the artist-researcher’s attention to being moved, emotionally, sensorily, imaginatively, is always in balance with the audiences’ needs to support the ways they might playfully extend and become foolishly disrupted without succumbing to their desires for easy answers. She discusses, after gathering feedback from works-in-progress presentations, the need to push past this feedback that either “pads the artist-researcher’s ego,” or allows audience members to offer suggestions that indulge in their own desires and sense of self (as seen when she says: “some people really get into, “Well, what I think you should do…””). The artist-researcher must focus on what tells the story best, based on research findings, in order that audience members might become foolishly disrupted. Later in her interview she confirms this tension by saying:

Audience is important. It’s also not like, well they – you wanna do what they like. It’s also you wanna be provocative and challenge and push and bring that along.

This provocation Mary Ellen speaks of can be linked to Brecht’s goals for theatre as an agent for social change, or to make the familiar strange and return also to our goals for creating Cracked: to challenge the tragedy discourse surrounding dementia and provide alternative ways of understanding dementia as filled with possibility. In order to make this familiar strange, or disrupt normative lines, audience members must risk being foolishly disrupted; they must risk “mov[ing] into another space” in order to “become different” (Greene, 2001, pp. 70-71, emphasis added).

**Exemplars**

In order to more clearly understand the ways that artist-researchers conceive of future, imagined audience members throughout the process of creation, I will draw on several examples from the script of Cracked. It should be noted that throughout Cracked we chose to shift the
aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience member between aesthetic distance and aesthetic closeness. Much of the play rested within a more traditional narrative-oriented drama, where a story takes place between characters that is witnessed by audience members. There were particular moments where we chose to shift the aesthetic frame to push audience members into a different relationship with the stage-action, thereby encouraging a different type of playful extending. While not the only examples, these specific scenes I draw on here focus on moments where we purposefully shifted the aesthetic frame. Specifically I will draw on two examples where we chose to break or disrupt the fourth wall (the imaginary wall between stage-action and audience) in different ways.

**Tick Tock**

This scene, which we called *Tick Tock*, is the second scene in *Cracked*. It follows the opening, *The Lobster Trap Scene*, which I described in detail in Chapter 5. *Tick Tock* is a movement sequence that I might call a *postdramatic moment*. In postdramatic theatre, which builds on avant-garde performance from the 1960s and beyond, the emphasis of the performance moves towards the relationship between performer and audience members. Theatre studies scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) discusses how a postdramatic theatre offers “an intentionally unmediated experience of the real (time, space, body)” (p. 134). This moves away from the emphasis on the artifice of more traditional dramatic structures which might focus on a story between performers, witnessed by audience members. Following what Lehmann terms the “estrangement of theatre and drama” (p. 30) and the move away from an emphasis on literary narrative within the performance, postdramatic theatre does not rely on traditional dramatic staples such as dramatic action (the way the plot moves ahead because of what the characters do), dramatic obstacles (what gets in the way of the plot moving forward, contributing to dramatic tension), and characters with intentions. Rather its focus lies on a less logical form of performance that incorporates a range of performance genres (such as music, visual art/design, dance) within the theatrical experience more akin to performance art.

As the first scene in the play, *The Lobster Trap Scene* orients audience members towards a more traditional narrative structure and as such we expected audience members to extend themselves within the aesthetic frame of the play in particular ways. In other words, *The Lobster Trap Scene* was “the starting point for orientation… from which the world [of the play] unfold[ed]” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 8). With *Tick Tock* as a postdramatic moment, we were attempting to re-orient the stage-action away from the traditions of the dramatic as seen in *The*
Lobster Trap Scene to concentrate more on the interaction between performers and audience. Mary Ellen and the actor playing Sheila both drop their characters by shifting their posture, standing erect and turning themselves towards the ensemble, who all begin to sing a monotone sound reminiscent of The National Research Council Official Time Signal (which leads up to exactly 13:00 hours on CBC⁴ Radio One). As an ensemble, the actors move together and the lines they form swing across the stage like pendulums in a clock. The lines cross and actors pass between each other, all the while singing the song Official Time Signal (composed by ensemble member and study research participant, Greg) to signal the disruption of normative structures of time.

Once the ensemble has moved into a downstage position where everyone is in a straight line facing the audience, they pause, with their left hand holding their right elbow and right hand in front of their nose with pointer finger extended. After this pause the ensemble sings a new song, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (also composed by Greg) while each actor in unison with the others draws a circle in front of their body with their finger: starting up at their nose, around to the side and pointing down towards the floor and around to the top again, reminiscent of the hands on a clock. The singing begins to fragment, as the actors break into different harmonies and some begin to count backwards. At the same moment that harmonies begin, additionally some actors begin to move differently: one starts winding in a circle her waist, another starts twitching her head to the side, another’s arm moves part way around the circle, only to bounce back to the top again. Only two actors continue with the same movements established at the beginning of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Eventually, the line breaks apart and actors move into new positions and set up the furniture for the next scene, leaving Mary Ellen playing Elaine standing alone downstage saying “What does this all mean?”

With this scene, and as the actors face the audience directly, we were choosing not to present the play exclusively as a “walled-off [by a fourth wall] fictional totality, but [as] a world open to its audience” (Jürs-Munby, 2006, p. 12). This ‘open’ scene directly asks audience members to engage with the aesthetic experience of the stage-action differently by co-writing the scene and make meaning of it, even if that meaning-making is not accessible in the immediate performed moment. Audience members are not connecting the points in the dramatic narrative, or continuing to orient themselves along the continuation of the line proposed through The Lobster Trap Scene. Audience members “are asked to become active witnesses who reflect on

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⁴ CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
their own meaning-making and who are also willing to tolerate gaps and suspend the assignment of meaning” (Jürs-Munby, 2006, p. 6).

Through *Tick Tock*, things come out of line in two ways. First, the overall dramatic structure becomes disoriented as the postdramatic moment disrupts the alignment of the play as presented narratively through *The Lobster Trap Scene*. And second, the scene itself is disorienting as the unified ensemble singing and moving together becomes fragmented through the different harmonies and disjointed movements as the scene progresses.

Through *Tick Tock* we were aiming to disorient our audience and disrupt the ways they might be settling into a more traditional narrative introduced through *The Lobster Trap Scene*. With *The Lobster Trap Scene*, we were aware of and took advantage of the cultural dominance of the narrative form in theatre – North American audiences are generally more comfortable witnessing stories – and we asked our audience members to playfully extend in particular imaginative, embodied ways, to engage with a particular kind of aesthetic closeness. With *Tick Tock* that playful extending shifts to one where the audience becomes aware of their own presence within the aesthetic frame of the play; here we were attempting to push beyond what our audience might desire, as continuing to sit within a more traditional narrative structure. In this moment, our intention was for audience members to re-orient themselves to the stage-action through this new direct relationship with the performers and attend to the ways they might be implicated in the performance beyond witnessing the narrative.

This postdramatic moment of fragmented movements and singing blurs the line between characters and performers; actors here do not playfully extend towards any particular character, research finding or specific experience of a research participant. While we were gesturing towards an embodied, imaginative understanding of the experiences of other people, we were playfully extending in quite a different way from *The Lobster Trap Scene*. We were not directly gesturing towards *specific* experiences of other people (of a person living with dementia engaging in embodied gestures of working in the hallway of a long term care home, for example), but rather we were gesturing *abstractly*. The performers’ gestures, for example, while recognizable as walking and arms moving in circles indicating hands on a clock, were not pedestrian, everyday movements. These movements were abstracted, taken out of a naturalistic context, in order to gesture towards a more abstracted experience of fragmentation and disorientation. Through the fragmentation of movements and singing we were abstractly gesturing towards potentially disorienting experiences of time and space for persons living with
dementia. Our intention was that as *Tick Tock* progressed, despite that the components of the actors’ downstage line were seemingly coming out of sequence through the fragmentation of movement and song, despite that the sequence was seemingly *failing*, there was still a beauty and coherence to this moment as a whole. We were asking audience members to tolerate the disorientation with the hopes that they might attend to the beauty of the moment, rather than only seeing the disruption of the sequence as an unproductive or negative failure.

These embodied and imaginative gestures took place in order to create a different aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience, one that differently mobilizes the audience’s “own ability to react and experience in order to realize their participation in the process that is offered to them” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 135). With a more traditional dramatic form, such as with *The Lobster Trap Scene*, the potential lies for audience members to become closely drawn into the action of the story such that they might not attend to their own presence in the performance or critically engage. While this aesthetic closeness is important and has distinct advantages, this postdramatic moment of *Tick Tock* helped to “address, show, destabilize and interrupt the ‘performativity’” of the play *as well as* the performativity of dementia as tragic and filled only with loss (Jürs-Munby, 2006, p. 6); as artist-researchers, we shifted the aesthetic relationship with audience members to invite them to engage differently. We asked audience members to experience disorientation themselves through the fragmentation of movement and singing, tolerating the gap in the normative dramatic structure. We asked them to do this while suspending immediate assignment of tangible cognitive meaning in order to remind audience members of their participation in the performance, as well as in the construction of the tragedy discourse of dementia as only filled with loss. In this way, our intention was for audience members to become foolishly disrupted, meaning the way they inhabit the world might fleet or shift. With this postdramatic moment of disorientation, our hope was that there was a moment of failure for audience members, of being undone, of feeling lost, of recognizing not knowing. While audience members might not have been able to articulate with words, as a team of artist-researchers we were aiming to suggest that this disruptive moment might “offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 2-3). Our intention was for audience members to become vulnerable with feelings of uncertainty or even ridiculousness, with the potential to attend to and understand differently, in order to move towards a deeper understanding of the relationship between their own bodily horizon and those living with dementia.
Verbatim direct address: persons with dementia

The second example I will draw on is in fact two scenes: My system is cracked, which is a short monologue by Elaine to the audience, and He is my hero, also a short monologue by Vera to the audience. I analyze these scenes together because they are both moments of direct address, meaning the actor breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience directly. Below are the two monologues from the script:

SCENE 6a – My system is cracked
ELAINE  My system is cracked. I am not consistent in my doing. I lose track of what’s important and what’s not important or what I should do or should not do. So it makes it difficult to be steady. That’s my problem. I misunderstand or I don’t understand. And I come out sometimes wrong not knowing that I am or would be.

SCENE 8 – My hero, my husband
VERA steps down stage centre and addresses the audience.
VERA  He’s my hero. I don’t need any more than that. It gives me enough that I have his support, knowing that what I say may be wrong things or do wrong things but he knows me. We’ve been married 25, 30, 40 years and we are each other’s opposite in that we know if he needs help then I can help him and vice versa. That is very important in a marriage. It’s not that you fight each other. You support each other.

It should be noted that while these texts were altered slightly to support our dramatic needs, almost all of the words in these monologues were taken verbatim from transcripts from the December 2011 focus groups with persons living with dementia. As an example of one such change, the verbatim text of Elaine’s speech starts with “My system is warped”; however, we changed the text to read “My system is cracked” for consistency with the metaphor of the ‘crack’ as a symbol of ‘failure as possibility,’ inspired by Leonard Cohen’s Anthem: “there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in” (1993, p. 373).

With these moments of direct address, we were purposefully disrupting the fourth wall and shifting to a different aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience. Unlike the previous example of Tick Tock, these actors continued to stay in character while addressing the audience, aware of their presence. During these monologues, the characters look directly at audience members, shifting their gaze among persons within the audience; this is in contrast to
*Tick Tock* where the actors look at a suspended, imagined space above the audience members heads. In these direct address moments, the characters as persons with dementia seem to acknowledge the audience’s unique, direct relationship with them as characters. The characters of Elaine and Vera are exposing their inner thoughts and feelings directly to the audience, rather than that exposure taking place through the dramatic action of the other more traditional scenes in the play.

In these contexts, we were aiming for direct address to accomplish three things. First, there is a direct vulnerability exposed on the part of the character, as the person with dementia. Second, by stepping outside of the construct of the more traditionally structured scenes in the rest of the play, the artifice of the play becomes exposed similarly to *Tick Tock*. Our aim with this exposure was for audience members to potentially hear the words of these characters with dementia differently than they might have within the more traditionally structured scenes. Third, by stepping outside the traditional bounds of the other scenes, space is also disrupted. The “empty” performance space (Brook, 1968) becomes different in these direct address scenes, in comparison with the imaginative, reinvented spaces of the previous scenes, where the miming and gesturing of the actors reinvents the space a new requiring audience members to imaginatively co-construct the space. In these direct address moments, the characters inhabit a kind of open space, or space with no direct meaning; the characters with dementia inhabit this open space directly with the audience without the other characters. In this way, these moments are foolish, in that the character steps outside the normative frame of the play to risk ridiculousness; the ridiculousness of exposing their vulnerabilities as well as the ridiculousness of exposing the play as an artifice. Person with dementia and audience together share a vulnerable intimacy through these specific scenes.

Additionally, as the play progresses, we continued to play with the aesthetic relationship between stage-action and audience members by drawing some of the lines spoken by these two characters with dementia in these two verbatim monologues into later scenes, to be spoken by persons without dementia. Our intention with the echoing of these lines by characters without dementia was to draw attention to the ways that those persons without dementia also experience moments of cracking, disorientation, undoing and being lost. These moments of cracking occur despite being oriented along normative social lines of the ‘success’ of not living with memory loss. The most obvious example of this is the scene *Tom is Lost*, which I analysed in Chapter 5. To recall this scene, Tom says to Vera that “I’ve lost track of what I should do or should not do.
So I come out sometimes wrong” and that this makes it “difficult to be steady.” These lines echo what Elaine has said in her verbatim monologue in the scene *My system is cracked*. This notion of ‘steadiness’ is later repeated by Tom and Vera’s adult daughter Susie in the second last scene of the play, *Knight in Shining Armour*. Susie, who returns to see her mother in a long term care home after a long time away, confesses to her dad that “I’m not feeling very steady here.” Tom’s response to Susie, “you don’t need to be steady, cracks are how the light gets in,” is a repetition from what he has learned from Vera in *Tom is Lost*. Additionally in *Tom is Lost*, Vera assures Tom that “you are my hero” as a repetition from her own verbatim monologue. This notion of being a hero is repeated by Suzie when she confesses to Tom that “she [Vera] used to be my hero” in reference to her mother; Suzie is only able to see the loss in her mother as she lives with dementia. However, Tom replies “she’s still mine” to challenge this notion of loss and suggest that it is because of Vera’s dementia that they have continued to be in a learning and growing relationship.

These lines once spoken by a person with dementia in the direct address scenes (*My system is cracked* and *He is my hero*) are purposefully repeated by persons not living with dementia to discretely align the experiences of different characters within the play. As playwright, I did this with the aim to draw audience members into these moments with persons not living with dementia, to bring an aesthetic closeness. I understood that audience members might not have been able to fully articulate the linkages between the direct address scenes and these other more traditionally dramatic scenes; but my hope was that having heard the words directly from persons with dementia earlier in the play, audience members might attend to them differently when encountering them within more traditional scenes spoken by persons living without dementia. With the words appearing in a new context, I anticipated that audience members might unconsciously notice or attend to the use of language, despite perhaps not cognitively recognizing them. The scenes were constructed and used this language with the intention that audience members might extend towards experiences of persons with dementia differently with the potential to be foolishly disrupted. By repeating these lines, our hope was that audience members might imaginatively, emotionally, sensorily extend or commit towards the actors’ words and the scene more broadly.

**Summary**

Through this chapter I have highlighted the ways artist-researchers imagine future audience members during the creative process and how they craft the stage-action to shift the
way audience members might experience the research-informed play. Additionally, I discussed the ways audience members are understood to be participants in the performance event itself, and artist-researchers work to support their playful extending towards the research-informed play. Artist-researchers do this to encourage audience members to become foolishly disrupted. By playfully extending towards the research-informed play, audience members might experience a moment of failure, of becoming undone, so that they might also envision and move into newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces.

I also articulated the things or truths that artist-researchers understand they are exploring and anticipate that audience members also engage with. These truths were linked with the body, emotions, senses and the ways that artist-researchers imaginatively, foolishly and relationally “dig down to find” among other people. Exploring these truths for artist-researchers are not about observing a finite object, but about “believing” and “being believed;” about imaginatively and foolishly committing to the play with audience members. However through Chapters 5 and 6 what is left unexplored is what happens, or the space that is created, as artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt through the creative process of research-informed theatre. As such, in the next chapter I will fully explicate an aesthetic of relationality as a space of sensing implicating a multiplicity of bodies as imaginative and foolish within time.
7. **An aesthetic of relationality**

It is through the combined means of *playful extending, foolish disrupting* and *inventive disrupting* that artist-researchers support and create within an *aesthetic of relationality*. By playfully extending, artist-researchers imaginatively, actively and vulnerably draw on, but move past, their own embodiment to enact gestures of embodied, imagined understanding of the research findings, including the experiences of the research participants. Through foolish disrupting, artist-researchers attend to the relationship between their own embodiment and research findings in space and time, by bravely and vulnerably risking failure or being wrong in order to do their own bodily horizons differently. Through the disruption of her own bodily horizon and the extension of that body, the artist-researcher also inventively disrupts surrounding physical and social/cultural/historical spaces, in that space is re-invented as something it is not in the performed moment; space becomes imagined as something different by what artist-researchers do within it. Artist-researchers additionally create the research-informed play to set up a particular (albeit fluid) aesthetic relationship with audience members so that audience members themselves might playfully extend towards the performance; playful extending on the part of audience members holds the potential to lead to foolish disruptions of their bodily horizon and moving into newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces. In this way, artist-researchers’ playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting are not only embodied, imaginative and foolish, but also relational. They always occur in context: in time, physical and social/cultural/historical spaces, and in relation to other people and things.

As artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt a space of sensing forms, an aesthetic of relationality, which implicates multiple imaginative and foolish perspectives within time. An aesthetic of relationality can be understood as the space where artist-researchers engage in an embodied, imaginative and foolish relationship within time among things and other people, including research participants/community members, artist/social/health researchers, and audience members (as either imagined during creation or actual during performance). An aesthetic of relationality disrupts an aesthetic of objectivity in that it invites a move away from purely ‘naturalist’ or ‘realist’ approaches to performance and opens up metaphoric interpretations of the experiences of other people. There is a shift away from the emphasis on text through this space, as a multiplicity of imaginative and foolish bodies are implicated within time and space. The recognition that aesthetics are relational opens up how
we might understand that artistic processes do not necessarily obscure original research findings or experiences of research participants; rather there is the potential to invite an emotional, sensory, imaginative, foolish aesthetic engagement of all involved. An aesthetic of relationality can expand to include the performance event itself, where the potential continues for multiple people to explore stories, emotional and sensory experiences, theoretical concepts, research findings through the theatrical form within space and time.

At first glance, an aesthetic of relationality seems aligned with art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud’s framework *Relational Aesthetics* (2002). Originally published in French in 1998, Bourriaud’s book emerged out of Europe and North America’s visual art scene and suggests that the (visual) artist’s practice is not solely about what the artist does to engage with her chosen art form as a neutral art technique (painting, sculpting, etc.). Rather the artist creates the artwork in order to provoke an aesthetic, relational engagement between viewer and artwork within social contexts; or the artwork provides an “encounter” and “the collective elaboration of meaning” (p. 15). He defines ‘relational art’ as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (p. 113). In this way, relational aesthetics/art breaks with the traditional social and physical space of the art gallery and the viewer’s experience of the constructed social environment becomes the art. Bourriaud discusses the ways contemporary art continues to move away from being understood as a luxury or an elitist acquisition towards “an opening to unlimited discussion” as a “social *interstice*” as a space of human relations (pp. 15-16, emphasis in original). This space “encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the “communication zones” imposed upon us” such as wake-up calls devoid of a live human being or automatic cash machines (p. 17). Throughout his book, Bourriaud provides examples of how artists are creating artworks that are “no longer… form[ing] imaginary utopian realities, but… actually be[ing and enacting] ways of living and models of action within the existing real” (p. 13). The artist “dwells in the circumstances the present offers him… [and] he catches the world on the move” (pp. 13-14). As an example he writes:

When Gabriel Orozca… slings a hammock in the MoMA garden in New York (*Hamoc en la moma*, 1993), he is operating at the hub of “social infra-thinness” (l’infra-mince social), that minute space of daily gestures determined by the superstructure made up of “big” exchanges, and defined by it. Without any wording, Orozco’s [art works] are a documentary record of tiny revolutions in the common urban and semi-urban life… They record this silent, still life nowadays formed by relationships with the other… The
exhibition is the special place where such momentary groupings [of different people] may occur (p. 17).

Bourriaud attests that onlookers participate in the artwork to varying degrees as required by the artist and, along with “the nature of the works and models of sociability proposed and represented, an exhibit will give rise to a specific “arena of exchange”” (p. 17). Such artworks, while “judged” in part by aesthetic criteria (or by analyzing the coherence of its form), must also be judged by its “symbolic value of the “world” it suggests to us, and of the image of human relations reflected by it” (p. 18). In this way, he defines ‘relational aesthetics’ as “aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt” (p. 112). He aligns this relational aesthetics with ‘co-existence criterion’ which insists that with this democratic form “all works of art produce a model of sociability, which transposes reality or might be conveyed by it” (p. 109). He recommends that we ask of any aesthetic product or production: “Does this work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines?”

Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* is performative and socially situated, and parallels the way many theatre and performance theorists frame the aesthetic encounter between performer/stage-action and audience member. *Relational Aesthetics* diverges from an aesthetic of relationality in that Bourriaud does not draw overtly on theories of embodiment to frame his discussions. While he might allude to embodiment by referencing the artist’s “autobiography” (p. 51) or how artworks “co-exist” or exist in “co-habitation” with an audience member (p. 56) who must “contribute… his whole body, with its history and behavior” to engagement with the artwork (p. 59), Bourriaud does not specifically draw on theories of embodiment to discuss the artistic process or the aesthetic encounter. Specifically, he does not draw on theories of embodiment to explicate the intimate relationship between a person’s body (or “bodily horizon”) and surrounding social/cultural/historical spaces, and what this means for the ways artists create works of art and the relational, aesthetic encounter between artwork and viewer/audience member. There is also no mention of the ways that artworks might or might not be informed by the experiences of other people in their creation; how experiences of research participants might inform the artistic process, or how imagined audience members might or might not be additionally considered. Bourriaud additionally does not link *Relational Aesthetics* with notions of imagination or foolishness. He does not discuss the ways artists engage their imaginations or risk failure and ridiculousness as part of their artistic process, nor does he discuss either of these
notions as part of the aesthetic encounter between artwork and audience member. *Relational Aesthetics* was also not developed to speak across paradigmatic or disciplinary boundaries, particularly with the sciences.

**Modes of Practice: ways of forming an aesthetic of relationality**

I offer here a full explication of the ways that artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt, the ways these modes of practice intertwine and what this means for an aesthetic of relationality.

**Playful extending: reaching out towards other people**

By playfully extending, the artist-researcher imaginatively and actively draws on, but moves past, her own embodiment to enact gestures of embodied, imagined understanding of the research findings, including the experiences of the original research participants.

“How can you actually convey an older person in this body [points to chest] and make it believable for the audience? Just as, playing an older person or a younger, I think that that's the magic of your imagination and what you can agree to as a performer and an audience.” Mary Ellen

Mary Ellen touches on the importance of the relationship between attending to her own bodily horizon, committing to, or extending towards the body of an older person as the character she will be playing, and how the audience will come to be engaged with her story and her embodied work as a performer. In this section, I will focus on this relationship between how the artist-researcher attends to her own bodily horizon and extends towards the experiences of the research participant which will be shaped into a character in the play.

Extending is a commitment and involves direction, or the position the artist-researcher takes towards something; to commit to something is not only a promise to the future, but also indicates that you are coming from somewhere behind you. “If we commit to a bodily action (such as a specific stroke in tennis), then the body is already “behind” the action” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 17). The artist-researcher’s body extends into space and towards something, recognizing that what she does, her actions, (for example, Ahmed’s reference to a woman desiring another woman) has implications for what she can do and how she is perceived by other people. For the artist-researcher to commit to or extend through a gestural enactment can also be a kind of directing towards a particular line of thought.
It should be noted that extending involves otherness. “What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 115). It must be understood that I reference Other here not as a form of negation or the opposite of positive, but that everything that is not you is an Other. “The body extends its reach by taking in that which it is “not” it… [and] the “not me” is incorporated into the body, extending its reach” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 115). In this way, the body of the artist-researcher extends in order to do things, to acquire new capacities and directions.

Through the creation of research-informed theatre, the artist-researcher extends and commits towards particular lines of thought, but she does so playfully. Extending as part of the creative process of research-informed theatre is not fixed, but rather experimental, responsive and involves reciprocal, dialogic actions of all involved as a way to engage with research findings, other people, physical space and social/cultural/historical spaces. It is important that play not be understood as any less real or significant than the experiences of research participants, the artist-researcher’s own experiences or those of the imagined, future audience members; it is through a playful approach “all involved are creating something together, in jointly constructing ways of seeing other possibilities” (Thrift, 2007, p. 148). Play allows for learning to happen and the potential for change to take place.

*Foolish and inventive disrupting: unsettling bodies and spaces*

As artist-researchers we “start” exploration from our own body, and “turn” or take a particular direction which enables us to find our way by situating ourselves in relation to social/cultural/historical spaces. We consider the “oriented-ness” of our embodied starting point throughout our investigations. We consider or attend to our own “oriented-ness” or our bodily horizon by purposefully disorienting or disrupting ourselves, physically, imaginatively and actively. If being in-line means we are oriented, or extending into space along particular points of alignment, then to be out of line means our individual bodily horizon, and by extension the normative social line, is disrupted. To disrupt or “queer” is a way of “inhabiting the world at the point in which things fleet” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 172). Disruptions take place at transient moments of failure to extend the normative.

Through foolish disrupting the artist-researcher attends to the relationship between her own embodiment in space and time and research findings, by bravely and vulnerably risking failure or being wrong in order to do her own bodily horizon differently. As the artist-researcher disrupts her own bodily horizon, the potential is there to disrupt surrounding spaces as well.
Through the disruption of her own bodily horizon and the extension of that body, surrounding physical and social/cultural/historical spaces are also *inventively disrupted*, in that the space is re-invented as something it is not. Here I will further define both foolish disrupting and inventive disrupting.

*Foolishly disrupting bodies*

*“We jump into something, we usually fail miserably... or we get one step closer.”* Elise

Elise touches on the importance of *jumping* or *diving into* the process and the research findings with openness. While potentially overwhelming, this openness must not be feared as it will allow to you both “fail miserably” and “get one step closer”; getting one step closer does not happen without failure which needs to be embraced. These failures throughout the whole process offer new opportunities to understand or see the material in a new way. Even as artist-researchers move closer to the performance itself, where there might be a more nuanced embodied, imaginative understanding of the research findings, there continues to be a risk of failure; in the performed moment, there is the risk that a gesture may not represent imagined understandings authentically. Without the risk or the vulnerability, there holds no promise for artist-researchers to relationally engage audience members.

Foolishly disrupting “opens up other ways of facing the world” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 564) beyond one’s own bodily horizon; in this way, the artist-researcher pays attention to points of tension, disorientation or social and personal “wonky moments” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 562), which can help provide insight into normative social/cultural/historical spaces as well as personal/embodied experience. The artist-researcher starts with her own bodily horizon, she imagines and does (with gestures, words, etc.) as a way to overturn assumptions and understand differently, and to begin to work relationally as an ensemble with other artist-researchers. Through exploratory work, artist-researchers risks ridiculousness through embodied and imaginative experimentation, such as speaking/language, moving, gesturing, as a way to understand and imagine herself and the research findings differently. Here, not only are artist-researchers coming to relate to or understand the research findings differently or more fully, but they are beginning to generate theatrical material, which will later be honed into the research-informed play itself.
LeCoq (2001) discusses how in exploring lived experience it is important to revive it in the simplest way, to avoid transposition and exaggeration, and without excessive thought to or for audience members. In order to work towards this simple reviving, the artist-researcher comes to the work with a willingness to fail and be wrong. She cannot be concerned with being ridiculed, and in fact embraces the possibility of the surprise of ridiculousness. This vulnerable, embodied and imaginative work focuses on moving past intellectual assumptions of what is thought of the lived experience, gesturally enacting embodied, imagined responses and expressions as a kind of exploration and analysis. This process of foolishly disrupting is an attempt to explore tacit knowledge, or what is known but cannot be told (Polanyi, 2009 [1966]). Through foolish disruptions the artist-researcher attends to the messiness of not knowing and emotionally, sensorily, imaginatively and physically risks failure in order to aesthetically understand the research findings differently.

*Inventively disrupting spaces*

“You’ve got to be in the space, so you have to try to the best of your ability just see where you are, you’re creating this for an audience. There isn’t, we don’t have a set that looks like a hospital, so I have to see the hospital, be in the hospital and then the audience is going to accept that.” James

There is an important influence of the artist-researcher’s foolish disruptions on surrounding space. As the bodily horizon of the artist-researcher becomes disrupted through her actions, the space surrounding her as she engages in those actions also becomes different. There is a relational dimension between the disruption of the artist-researcher’s bodily horizon and the physical as well as social/cultural/historical spaces that can simultaneously be imagined and become different, or be re-invented.

“Space acquires “direction” through how bodies inhabit it” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 12). A dining room is what it is in part because my family eats in it, and uses the things within it to eat; sitting on chairs pulled up to a table, scooping rice onto a fork in order to bring it to our mouths to chew and swallow. As a family, we are “claim[ing] space, to take up that space through what [we do] with [our] bod[ies]” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 11). We become part of the space as we expand and extend into it. In this way, there is an intimate relationship between bodies and space, where spaces are impacted and shaped by what we do within them. Artist-researchers attend to this bodily and spatial relationship through their creative work. By imaginatively inhabiting or
extending a body in a particular way, there is the possibility for space to acquire a certain “direction” other than what it might actually be. In this way, a space has the potential to become something it is not in the moment of creation and/or performance; space is not fixed but holds potentiality. In this way, the space is *inventively disrupted*. It is created as something it is not in the performed moment by what bodies are doing within it. The body of the artist-researcher might sit on a chair, close her fingers around an imagined spoon, shift her curled hand towards her mouth and open her lips as the imagined spoon moves closer, indicating the gesture of eating. Through the extensions of this body, the space is inventively disrupted to become an imagined eating area.

**Intertwining disrupting and extending**

In the creative process for research-informed theatre, an artist-researcher extends, or commits towards a particular direction, attending to her own bodily horizon in relation to a multiplicity of others. Committing vulnerably and imaginatively from the starting place of her bodily horizon has implications for how others will come to playfully extend towards her. In this way, the artist-researcher works relationally and playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting become intertwined. Playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting occur as responses to or “(re)actions” (Ahmed, 2004) towards what is taking place around the artist-researcher.

To better understand the ways extending and disrupting intertwine I draw on the theatrical technique of miming, which we drew on heavily as part of *Cracked*. LeCoq discusses how to mime is “to embody and therefore to understand better” (2001, p. 22). Miming provides people with insight into actions and objects they are engaged with as part of their daily existence. As LeCoq discusses “a person who handles bricks all day long reaches a point where he no longer knows what he is handling. It has become an automatic [or normative] part of his physical life. If he is asked to mime handling a brick, he redisCOVERs the meaning of the object, its weight and volume” (p. 22). In this way it is also the action of miming that becomes a way of imaginatively embodying a new understanding. The miming takes place when, based on his physical experience of laying bricks, the brick layer imagines the brick to be there, including its weight and size, and enacts the movement of laying it based on these imaginings and previous experience. In this way, the brick layer *playfully extends* himself by taking a particular position or movement towards the imaginary brick, or commits to the action of imaginatively miming the brick. The brick handler may not mime the laying of the brick believably at first: perhaps he
cannot recall the weight in the right way, or cannot wrap his fingers in a way around the imaginary brick to be believable. In this way his movement, or commitment to his imagined gesture, is ridiculous. In this way, the brick handler perhaps *fails*. But in continuing to experiment with miming the brick, to vulnerably try again, continually exposing himself to being wrong, he can move towards a more nuanced understanding of the brick for himself and those who watch him. The imaginative action of miming is a kind of *foolish disruption* to his own body, in that the brick is not actually there, and his body’s actions are disrupted, or done differently, through the imaginative movements. He vulnerably and playfully attends to his own body through miming and re-discovers it along with the meaning of the object. Foolish disruption takes place through playful extending, in that it is not until the brick layer commits to or extends towards the gesturing of the imaginary brick that he understands that he has done it wrong. However, it is also the foolish disruption that allows playful extending to take place, in that by being wrong the brick layer can commit to or take a particular direction towards miming the imaginary brick differently. Additionally, through his playful extensions, the brick layer also *inventively disrupts* his surrounding space through the actions of miming the brick. The brick is not actually there and there is no mortar, no wall being built. However, as the brick layer playfully extends towards the imagined brick, curls his fingers, engages his muscles to lift it, places it upon imagined bricks below, the spaces of the brick and wall are invented and become themselves.

To be clear, playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting are not only about what the *physical* body does, but about *all actions* the artist-researcher engages in through the creation of research-informed theatre. For example, LeCoq attests that all artists (and I would extend this to include all artist-researchers), such as Pablo Picasso painting a bull, are mimes in that they have or search for internal dynamics of meaning of the thing itself, which is then shaped through the gesture or doing of the work (movement, painting, etc). Picasso’s painting *Dying Bull* (1934) is an enacted gesture of his embodied, imagined understanding of the actual, physical bull. However, I suspect that Picasso in his journey as an artist and in creating this painting of the bull made several foolish attempts to disrupt the canvas and his own bodily horizon with these gestures of painting as part of his imagining and understanding it. Additionally, the space of the canvas where the mark is made is invented anew through the gesture of painting and the resulting marks.
As another example, the use of metaphor is a kind of action that the artist-researcher engages with when playfully extending and foolishly/inventively disrupting. Metaphor can be understood as a symbolic relating or associating of two separate things with each other, potentially “turning your back on logic and reason completely” (Frye, 1963, p. 11). In his poem ‘o sweet spontaneous earth’, E.E. Cummings writes of “the naughty thumb of science prod[ing] earth’s] beauty” (1994, p. 18). Science, as a broad field of study and practice, is not a person, let alone one with a thumb; however, Cummings metaphorically assigns science agency by allocating it with a naughty thumb that prods the beautiful earth, which opens up a particular relationship of power between these two entities. In this way, the metaphorical assignment of agency to this field of study moves beyond “logical,” intellectual understandings of science. In using this metaphor, Cummings draws on embodied experiences of having been prodded or poked at as an inanimate object by someone who perhaps, as indicated by the word naughty, might be doing it without permission. Cummings imagines those embodied experiences, and by drawing seemingly illogical, distinct things together through his word choices, his critique of science becomes tangible without being fixed. While he might not be physically gesturing, Cummings’ metaphorical words occur as gestures from embodied knowing and imagination; he could not write the metaphorical words without having some experiences of being naughtily poked and prodded himself. I suspect through drafts of this poem, he may have foolishly attempted different words together as a way to experiment or come to understand the relationship between his own bodily horizon and his experiences (of science, of being prodded, of the earth), and his gestures through word choices; foolishly, in the face of being wrong, he may have disrupted the blank page and his own understandings of science by experimenting with different word choices in creating the poem. In the final poem, his word choices are a gestural enactment of his embodied, imagined understanding. The pages where the words are written are invented
as something different. The page is no longer blank, but has new meaning because of how Cummings playfully extended through his word choices. Additionally, the space of science as a field of study and practice is re-invented through the metaphor. He implicates his reader by asking them to also imagine, relate and perhaps understand differently. Had Cummings described science as having a gentle thumb that caresses earth’s beauty, the reader envisions and understands quite a different science.

Through playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting the relationship between the disruption of the artist-researcher’s bodily horizon and the space into which the artist-researcher extends is significant. Playful extending and foolish disrupting are personal in that it is through physical, experimental engagement with the research findings that the artist-researcher tries and does differently. But these concepts are also of social/cultural/historical significance, in that the artist-researcher disrupts and extends differently into the performance space as a physical space, with physical limitations such as a floor, ceiling, etc., as well as a social/cultural/historical space. Performance spaces can be understood as social/cultural/historical in that all involved in the performance, such as artist-researchers and audience members, bring particular assumptions to the space based on these contexts; as such these spaces are not neutral even though there may be normative expectations that are not obvious. The artist-researcher’s disruption and extension occurs inventively in space to create a particular (although fluid) aesthetic relationship with audience members as a way to invite their active engagement with the potential that they might become foolishly disrupted and newly imagine social/cultural/historical spaces.

Renowned English theatre director, Peter Brook (1968, 1993) discusses how theatre artists playing or creating in an open or “empty space” offers the potential for the imagination to “fill the space” and the story, drawing artists and audience members into the theatrical experience together (1993, p. 32). While critiques of Brook’s “empty space” indicate that, of course, no space is empty, as there are always physical limitations and social, cultural, historical and political assumptions brought to any space (Spatz, 2015, p. 14), Brook was working and writing in response to theatre of spectacle that values the ornate. He discusses how a minimal approach to design details, such as scenery or costume, provides an openness where “one can imagine, for example, an actor in his everyday clothes indicating that he is playing the pope by wearing a white ski hat” (Brook, 1993, p. 31). This actor is, of course, not the actual pope and I would push Brook further to suggest that this actor indicates he is playing the pope through multiple actions, including donning a white ski hat as a minimal design choice beyond his
everyday clothes, and by how he imaginatively and foolishly commits with his body and words. These actions disrupt the actor’s bodily horizon as well as the surrounding performance space as questions begin to open up about where the actor/pope is located. Additionally, the actor likely failed or seemed ridiculous in his initial attempts at donning the ski hat and enacting the pope. However, by continually trying different movements and postures, he explores the relationship between his own bodily horizon, attempts at pope-ness and gestural enactments that extend into the performance space to sufficiently disrupt it to re-invent it as something different in the moment of performance. The combination of the design choice of the ski hat (as an action) and the actor’s bodily actions such as movements and gestures disrupts both the actor’s normative bodily horizon and normative aspects of the space into which the actor acts.

As another example, Brook discusses how if an actor says “Hello… where is the Metro?” to another actor in an empty performance space, the audience member might imagine a street in Paris. However, if the second actor responds with “The Metro? Here? In the middle of Africa?” several imaginative options open up, as the image of the Paris street shifts (Brook, 1993, p. 30). Ultimately, it is the actions of the actors, as their words and what they do with their physical bodies, that disrupt the relatively empty performance space by imaginatively becoming what it is beyond the actual moment of performance. The space is inventively disrupted by the artist-researcher’s imaginative actions into the empty performance space. Here, audience members do not sit back passively; they are required to engage their imagination, influenced by the disruptions and extensions of the actors. In this way, audience members participate in this imaginative work and “becom[e] an accomplice to the action [of the play by]… accepting that a bottle becomes the tower of Pisa, or a rocket to the moon” (p. 32). It is anticipated that audience members will reciprocally, actively engage with the performance—or playfully extend—with the potential that they might become foolishly disrupted leading to a re-visioning of social/cultural/historical spaces.

**The aesthetics of experimental playfulness and mutual impressioning**

The ways the artist-researcher playfully extends and foolishly/inventively disrupts influences and leaves impressions upon other people and surrounding space simultaneous to being influenced and impressed upon as well. Playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting are not unilateral. It is not only the artist-researcher that extends towards the experiences of other people; rather the playful extending is reciprocal, multi-directional and transversal, accounting for multiple people and things within time and space. Swimming is an apt metaphor:
it is a way of being-in-the-world and as a form of movement that is not linear. When swimming, I must kick *back* and *down* with my feet and legs into the water, my hands cup the water as I push it *out* and *behind* me and my arms slice through the water in order to propel myself *forwards*. Water moves all around me, and I must account for its motion as I stroke and kick; it is also affected and moves in response to my actions. Additionally, when I stretch my limb it is not isolated within the limb: “all kinds of other places stretch and react” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 35, citing Forsythe, 2011, Nov 10). In this way, similar to the act of swimming, playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting are *motional-relational* and an aesthetic of relationality accounts for and requires that bodies are “moving in a sea of motion traces enveloped in the any-point” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 42). This kind of engagement requires working with potentiality; potentiality is filled with imagination beyond the *now* moment, bodily horizon and spaces.

An aesthetic of relationality embraces a multi-faceted approach to exploration beyond text and cognitive engagement and asks us to deeply consider, in our bodies, not just what we think about certain ideas or how we might analyze intellectually, but what we feel and sense about them and how these feelings and senses extend to our actions. Our bodily horizon is produced through the repetition of the physical body’s actions over time and in space, and either falls ‘in line’ with the normative or might be ‘queer/wonky’ in that it disrupts the normative. Social/cultural/historical spaces both inform this normative line and are shaped by the ways bodies extend into them. There is an intimate relationship between bodily and social/cultural/historical spaces. To quote Ahmed (2006b, p. 16):

> The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are… performative; they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, or routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.

To explore these lines that direct us as social/cultural/historical spaces and the ways our bodily horizon is shaped by and continues to produce these lines, an aesthetic space where we might imaginatively, foolishly and actively engage our embodiment beyond and in addition to intellectual means is imperative. Additionally, an aesthetic space is needed that acknowledges the interrelatedness of individual and social/cultural/historical spaces, that allows us to attend to the intermingling of our bodies, senses, emotions *and* intellect and that invites *exploration* of these things rather than a linear dictation of ideas and concepts.
An aesthetic of relationality implicitly involves otherness; “what is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 115). In continuing to focus on the artist-researcher, as she reaches towards something or someone, or extends gestures, she will stretch, which might mean that she is not comfortable. It requires that she experimentally extend beyond her usual gestures out into social/cultural/historical spaces in relation to other people; extending occurs imaginatively as she considers alternatives to the present. This stretching is disruptive and means she is out of line from her usual points of orientation; she has become “wonky” as she “inhabit[s]… the world at the point at which things fleet” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 70). The disruptions hold the potential to lead her to become re-oriented as she re-inhabits her body in order to extend into space differently. These disruptions, approached foolishly with a willingness to fail and be ridiculous, cause ripples. Ripples, as movements in response to the movement of another person or thing, are not smooth and have implications for how an artist-researcher might continue with awareness of what smooth once was. This imaginative and foolish extension and disruption of the body in relation to other people in time and space is not finite, but continually and actively happens so that “all involved are creating something together, in jointly constructing ways of seeing other possibilities” (Thrift, 2007, p. 148). However, with this joint constructing and coming to be disrupted in relation to each other in any given moment, there is potential for a great many ripples to bump into each other leading to turbulent waters. The aim is not to restrict the waters (after all, how do you restrict the sea?), but to support the mutuality of the ripples and to learn to navigate them without being overtaken. These tumultuous waters require “reorganizing the body itself, in its commotion with other bodies. It means activating collective rhythm on the level of a relational movement” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 43). The challenge with an aesthetic of relationality and navigating these tumultuous waters is for everyone to see what is actually in front of them, not what they want to see. This challenge is a kind of not knowing and being receptive to the disruptive; this receptivity, as foolish, keeps the process alive and uncertain. Everyone works to “turn... to the what-if as it commotionally appears”; the “what-if” is “actually seeing what’s in front of you” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 44).

An aesthetic of relationality happens in the now moment, informed by the past and looking to the future and to new spaces beyond the immediate. As temporal, an aesthetic of relationality can be a “container for all prior moments” as it moves towards the future (Bay-Cheng & Holzapfel, 2010, p. 20). Moments are not still but are in “gyration” and are “defined
by what your senses are compelled to attend to” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 13, citing Mukhopadhyay, 2008, p. 52). A multiplicity of things happen in any given moment, “a vying commotion of co-activity” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 14), but individual moments happen in time as a person perceives and senses things taking place. In this way, time is embodied and relational; it moves because of what and how multiple people sense it simultaneously.

Within an aesthetic of relationality time and space come to be intertwined. In creating research-informed theatre, artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt in order to support all involved to engage through the aesthetic experience of the play “in reciprocity, exchanging, replying, giving back uniquely one to the other” (Greene, 2001, p. 70). In this way, an aesthetic of relationality is spatial; as multiple people relationally extend and disrupt, space is formed between them to engage aesthetically, imaginatively and foolishly. This engagement holds the potential for people to “move into another [social/cultural/historical] space” (Greene, 2001, p. 71) by first imagining themselves and their actions differently as well as recognizing that spaces also hold the potential to be reinvented. However, we cannot move towards reimagined social/cultural/historical spaces if we have not attended reciprocally, with foolishness and imagination, in the present moment. Foolish disruptions occur at the “point[s] at which things fleet” (Ahmed, 2006b, p. 172) and happen unexpectedly through our bodies in relation to other people and within time and space. Foolish disruptions cannot be anticipated; if we know they’re about to happen, nothing will fleet or shift. These disruptions in the now moment as part of the experimental playfulness of an aesthetic of relationality, are moments of surprise, of “losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2) and provide opportunities for us to attend to our own bodily horizon. They happen because, while we extend towards other people into space, others are also extending towards us: there is a mutual impressioning with the potential to lead to a disruption. Foolish disruptions often include disappointment, disillusionment and despair, but can also lead to unexpected places. Foolish disruptions take place with other people through an aesthetic of relationality and can help us “re-think the project of learning and thinking altogether” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). Artist-researchers work to support an aesthetic of relationality in order to encourage a mutual presence of “giving back uniquely to one another” so that all might playfully extend leading to foolish disruptions and reinvention of surrounding space.

An aesthetic of relationality, borrowing from the words of my participants, is a space of “not forcing,” “not making assumptions,” “working from impulse,” “sensing what something
feels like,” “touching people,” “being exposed,” “being in the present moment,” and “not being clever.” It is a space where “the words, the actions, the emotions, the way your body moves, the way you hear things, the way you smell things, see things” are implicated, where you might not “[completely] understand [someone else’s experience]… but [you] can imagine.” It is a space of “being believable” so that others might believe you and where you might believe others; where you imaginatively and foolishly commit with your bodily horizon as emotional and sensory in order that you might “listen to the sound of the “what” that fleets” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 565). This embodied, imaginative, foolish commitment within an aesthetic of relationality is a “contact that makes a story and opens up other ways of facing the world” (Ahmed, 2006a, p. 564). Research-informed theatre within an aesthetic of relationality holds the potential to provide that space where one might “believe and not… believe at one and the same time” (Jackson, 2007, p. 204). The notion of believing, as an imaginative commitment, is working to actually see what is in front of you within the fictional frame of the research-informed play. It is not seeing the objective or the concrete, but mutually imaginatively committing, “exposing,” “touching,” with “the words, the actions, the emotions, the way your body moves, the way you hear things, the way you smell things, see things.” It is an “agreeing” together: “what you can agree to as a performer and an audience” imaginatively and foolishly with your senses, emotions and bodies in space and time.

An aesthetic of relationality is not “closed” but “open” and allows space for people to move and engage within it, imaginatively and foolishly with and through their bodies. As such, artist-researchers work to leave space, or “creative gaps” (Jackson, 2007) for the multiplicity of embodied, imaginative, foolish perspectives to engage aesthetically. Here I extend Jackson’s concept of “creative gaps” which he discusses as artistic choices that allow audience members to find their way aesthetically into the journey of the play. I contend that creative gaps allow all involved in an aesthetic of relationality to potentially find their way aesthetically, “engaging in reciprocity, exchanging, replying, giving back uniquely one to the other” (Greene, 2001, p. 70). The gaps support what we do not know; the “…unmaking, undoing, unbecoming [and] not knowing” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2) about the experiences and stories of other people without overtaking those experiences. The gaps allow each embodied perspective to imaginatively “fill the space” (Brook, 1993, p. 32); this invitation to engage imaginatively through creative gaps counters an aesthetic of objectivity which, through the attempt to linearly represent a “so-called real world” between research findings and performance, discourages dialogue or curiosity
(Denzin, 2003, p. 73). Through an aesthetic of objectivity the potentially turbulent waters emerging from multiple ripples is overridden by a very large boat being driven through them, with a very large wake in a particular direction. This is in contrast with the swimmer who attends to her own body as she rides and swims through the waves, pushing herself up and through the waters, simultaneously displacing it and allowing it to support her.

It is in these ways that all are invited into an aesthetic of relationality. It is through creative gaps, the mutual imaginative, foolish “agreeing” and “believing” of multiple bodies, the recognition of the fluidity and movement of time and space, the support and receptivity to surprise and failure, that we might relationally explore our bodily horizons alongside the lines that direct us as social/cultural/historical spaces. An aesthetic of relationality invites us to explore the relationship between the ways our own bodily horizon is shaped by and continues to manifest these lines and spaces and uniquely supports our attention to our embodiment imaginatively and foolishly, beyond and in addition to intellectual processes.

**Summary**

Through this chapter I articulated an aesthetic of relationality as a space of sensing created by the ways that artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt within time and among other people. I emphasized the ways that conceptualizing aesthetics as relational opens up how we might understand the ways artistic processes do not necessarily obscure original research findings, but that there is the potential to invite emotional, sensory, imaginative and foolish aesthetic engagement for a multiplicity of people. An aesthetic of relationality, formed by the ways artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt, rather than being linear is motional-relational, temporal, spatial, and implicitly involves otherness, in addition to being embodied, imaginative and foolish. By embracing the unknown, unmaking, and unbecoming, working within an aesthetic of relationality provides ‘creative gaps’ through the artistic frame so that all involved might find their way aesthetically. It is a space of “being believable” and believed for all involved; where all imaginatively and foolishly commit with their bodily horizon as emotionally and sensorily so that they might attend to fleeting, disruptive moments, feelings and thoughts. An aesthetic of relationality provides a space where we might explore our bodily horizon alongside the lines that direct us, as social/cultural/historical spaces.
8. Conclusion

Study overview

Through this study I aimed to critically theorize creating a research-informed play as a form of arts-based research by exploring the process of artist-researchers. I aimed to be in conversation with arts-based qualitative researchers, or those who take up arts methods as an extension of qualitative research, without being restricted to understanding this artistic form of knowledge production to what we already know in scientific terms. My aim was to develop a conceptual framework – an aesthetic of relationality – to challenge an aesthetic of objectivity, while fully embracing the spontaneity and aliveness of the art form. In developing this conceptual framework, my intention was to conceive research-informed theatre as a process of exploration. As such I embarked on an empirical study of the process of artist-researchers to understand the ways they imaginatively and foolishly implicate their embodiment.

I fulfilled this quest through a phenomenologically-informed interpretive case study, using the research-informed play Cracked: new light on dementia as my case. I have explored what we as artist-researchers do, our actions as embodied, imaginative, foolish responses to and extensions towards research findings (including the experiences of other people) in relation to each other as artist-researchers and future audience members within time and space. My study took the role of artist-researchers seriously within the process of research-informed theatre. I engaged participants’ and my own words to describe our own process, and attended to the embodied, imaginative and experimental nature of the process without fixing or firmly defining it as a finite method. My data were extensive: I drew on several different textual documents (written, visual and performance) including my own electronic process journal, video footage of rehearsals, works-in-progress presentations and performances (including participants bodies and imaginative actions), interviews with actors (which were videotaped), my hand-written notes from our in-studio work, and drafts of the script.

Theoretically, I merged three seemingly disparate concepts in order to provide a valuable structure to examine my data. I began with the concepts of embodiment and imagination. In defining the term embodiment, I drew heavily on the queer phenomenology of Sara Ahmed (2006a, 2006b) with particular attention to the relationship between an individual’s “bodily horizon” and social/cultural/historical spaces. I additionally defined imagination, drawing on theorists and philosophers from aesthetics and health (Greene, 2001; Hamington, 2004; Kontos & Naglie, 2007; Manning & Massumi, 2014), as extending our experience and ideas beyond
what is immediately present to our senses by, in part, drawing on our previous embodied experience as a starting point to relate to the experiences of other people. However, these concepts of embodiment and imagination did not fully capture what I was seeing in my data; as such I expanded my frame to include the theoretical concept of foolishness. Drawing primarily on discussions from theatre and performance studies (Bailes, 2011; Salveson, 2006, 2008; Stanley, 2013; Tannahill, 2015), theatre history (Goldsmith, 1974; Wiles, 2005 [1987]), as well as queer studies (Halberstam, 2011), I conceptualize foolishness as the ways that artist-researchers embrace failure, vulnerability and ridiculousness as part of their creative process. In developing an aesthetic of relationality, I explored the way these concepts intersect through the playful extending and foolish/inventive disrupting of artist-researchers.

**Summary of findings**

The findings of my study situate the creative process of research-informed theatre as a spontaneous, “alive,” multi-modal, multi-perspectival creative process, moving away from the emphasis on text and linear translation. The process for *Cracked* was a theatrical devising process, in that it combined a collaborative and improvisational creative process with a more traditional playwright-centred process; as such the spontaneity and “aliveness” of the process was perhaps more apparent because of our reliance on improvisation. With a devised approach, the “network” of theatre (Bay-Cheng & Holzapfel, 2010), as a process beyond what takes place between actor and audience member to include a plethora of people and things within time and space, might seem more obvious as multiple people directly inform the exploration of concepts and the generation of theatrical material informing the script through improvisation. However the findings from my study and my writing process as a research-informed playwright indicate that the “network” of theatre is still apparent even in a more traditional writing process. As a playwright I recognized that the scripted words were not sufficient; the aliveness and full aesthetic potential occurs once actors engage with the text, imaginatively and foolishly embodying it within time and space. I would suggest that even if the script were simply read by actors as a staged-reading (when the script is read aloud without any production values), the words can still be imaginatively and foolishly lifted off the page through the actors’ bodies and voices, in space and time with an audience witnessing. Despite that a full range of aesthetic options might not be taken advantage of (such as movement, design, visual imagery, sound), it is possible for an aesthetic of relationality to persist as the staged-reading takes place as a *happening*. Even with a staged-reading, the aesthetic modes still available to the artist-
researchers, engaged as “creative gaps,” can still support an aesthetic of relationality, such as bodies of the actors imaginatively and foolishly gesturing through their breath and voices towards the experiences of other people, as original research participants, each other and audience members. While it might be assumed that the emphasis remains exclusively on text in a staged-reading, there are still a range of aesthetic opportunities including bodies (and gestures, voices, breath), emotions, senses within space and time; all research-informed theatre holds the potential for aesthetic engagement between the project and its audience. It is what artist-researchers do in crafting the project, the ways they playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt even as part of a staged reading, which contributes to aesthetic engagement and supports an aesthetic of relationality.

An aesthetic of relationality provides a space where a multiplicity of people are invited to explore the lines that direct us as social spaces and the ways our bodily horizons are shaped by and continue to manifest these lines. Given the ways our bodily horizon and social/cultural/historical spaces might ‘disappear’ through repetition of the physical body’s actions over time and in space, to bring new light to the interrelatedness of these things requires a space where people are able to imagine and be foolish, as vulnerable, brave and ridiculous, with the support to fail. This kind of aesthetic space as a space of participatory inquiry is unique within the academy.

The engagement of the imagination is vital to an aesthetic of relationality as imagination supports the ways we attend to what we do not know. With the imagination there is a slippery slope towards allowing our own experiences to override those of other people; assuming we know as we draw on our own embodied starting place in order to relate when in fact we are simply imagining. This overtaking is not the intention through an aesthetic of relationality; imagination holds the potential to open up possibilities that might otherwise remain closed. I would suggest that imagination is already an integral part of much qualitative research, but a more open embrace of the different ways it is implicated is encouraged. Engaging the imagination allows us to flirt with the possibility of embracing frivolity and excess as productive, with the potential to venture in unknown, unexpected directions, which aligns with the notion of foolishness.

Considering foolishness as part of research asks us to place discomfort and disruption at the centre of exploration. Embracing failure, vulnerability and ridiculousness as part of scholarly inquiry does not align with traditional notions of academic rigor and order “but with inspiration
and unpredictability” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 10). Foolishness encourages an ‘untraining’ of sorts, “so that we can read the struggles and debates back into questions that seem settled and resolved” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 11). Entering inquiry naively embraces the notion that knowledge cannot be explored and shared without dialogic vulnerability and the willingness to get lost. This contradicts a great many traditional approaches to academic inquiry, particularly those working within the positivist paradigms.

**Significance of the research**

An aesthetic of relationality has important implications for practice. It opens up questions about how health and social researchers might conceive that their research findings might change and continue to be interpreted within a performance framework. Rather than assuming linearity between research findings and performance, social and health researchers should consider the ways this multi-perspectival approach disrupts and re-imagines their research findings and invites audience members (which might include research participants) into the process of exploration through the performance event itself. Additionally, those taking up an objective approach within performance and theatre studies, specifically in the areas of verbatim and documentary theatre practices and scholarship, should consider the ways that, despite a distrust of theatricality, their practice is already relational. How might theoretically framing verbatim and documentary theatre practice and scholarship through an aesthetic of relationality challenge and/or enrich the work? How might an aesthetic of relationality push verbatim/documentary theatre practitioners to more fully embrace the “network” of theatre as inherent to the practice? How might an aesthetic of relationality support the scholarly work of verbatim/documentary theatre scholars to frame and analyze the practice? Finally, an aesthetic of relationality holds the potential to inform the ways artist-researchers, or those in the newly emerging area of performance-as-research, frame and discuss research-informed cross-disciplinary performance projects. How might an aesthetic of relationality be drawn upon to plan or justify projects in advance of the creative process and assess a project’s potency and resonance, or evaluate it, after the fact?

Research-informed theatre that embraces an aesthetic of relationality aligns with an academy “as a new kind of public sphere with a different investment in knowledge, in ideas and in thought and politics” beyond a neo-liberal framework (Halberstam, 2011, p. 8). Research-informed theatre that embraces an aesthetic of relationality moves beyond normalized, routinized, conventional methods and refuses and resists traditional academic definitions of
‘rigor,’ ‘excellence’ and ‘productivity’ as being aligned with dissatisfaction with uncertainty and imprecise or uncontrolled process. This approach asserts itself against “the rush to bureaucratize and rationalize” a particular order that values profit and commodification over other motivations for being and doing (Halberstam, 2011, p. 9).

If an aesthetic of relationality provides new perspectives on notions of ‘rigor’ and ‘excellence’ for research-informed theatre, then attention must be paid to what productive questions might be asked of a research-informed play. These might include: Has the project supported a multiplicity of embodied perspectives to playfully and experimentally extend towards the story, based on experiences of research participants within time and space? Has the project provided sufficient ‘gaps’ to support the potential for multiple people to become foolishly disrupted? Has the project sufficiently supported the potential for multiple people to re-imagine or re-invent social/cultural/historical spaces within and beyond the performance event? Were all involved in the process and the performance itself provided the opportunity to engage with and attend to “the words, the actions, the emotions, the way your body moves [as well as others], the way you hear things, the way you smell things, see things”? Has space been created through the theatrical form where a multiplicity of people might aesthetically explore the relationship between their own bodily horizon and the social/cultural/historical spaces it produces and is shaped by? With these questions in mind, an aesthetic of relationality and the theoretical concepts of embodiment, imagination and foolishness push against traditional scientific notions of rigor and excellence, and offer criteria for what rigor and excellence should be for research-informed theatre. These criteria can be aligned with feminist educational theorist Patti Lather’s “voluptuous validity/situated validity” (1993, pp. 681-683). Lather situates a voluptuous/situated validity as an embodied validity and includes “a discursive excess which reveals the limits of the hegemonic male imaginary” (p. 682) as objective, hard, rigid and rigorous. A voluptuous/situated validity embraces partiality over the universal/objective, as well as “explicit incompleteness, tentativeness, the creation of space for others to enter, the joining of partial voices” (p. 682, citing Kirkpatrick, 1991). Authority emerges from engagement and self-reflexivity, and inquiry moves towards a risky and ‘leaky’ questioning rather than a definitive resolution. An aesthetic of relationality additionally extends and provides theoretical depth to criteria frameworks for creative analytic practices suggested by others such as Norman Denzin (2003) and Laurel Richardson (2000). These scholars suggest that aesthetic analytic practices reflexively expose and push against oppressive dominant discourses, create a space for dialogue,
evoke lived experience, imagine possible, hopeful futures and value “beauty and artistry, movement, rhythm, color (sic) and texture in everyday life” (Denzin, 2003, p. 113).

**Study limitations and next steps**

An obvious limitation of this research study is that the performance practices we engaged with throughout creating *Cracked* were based in European traditions and all of my research participants including me are from European-Canadian backgrounds. My participants, including me as co-participant, while diverse in a number of ways including gender, sexual orientation and age, are all North American of European heritage and trained in performance practices informed by or emerging from Europe; as such the practices we engaged in to create *Cracked* were limited to these approaches. To continue to provide additional critical theoretical depth to an aesthetic of relationality, it would be beneficial to further explore the ways that performance practices across cultures, such as from Indigenous perspectives, might broaden and enrich an aesthetic of relationality.

This study additionally does not attend to actual audience engagement with or responses to *Cracked* as a research-informed play. My study’s purpose was to explore the creative process of research-informed theatre not the performance event itself. Although the aesthetic encounter between stage-action and audience members was referred to throughout this study, and assumptions about that encounter were seen to inform the creative process, I did not engage with audience members as part of this study to better understand their experiences. An aesthetic of relationality can be understood as the space created when artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt relationally towards experiences of other people, including audience members. Currently, an aesthetic of relationality as a theoretical framework does not include whether audience members actually playfully extend or become foolishly disrupted with the possibility to re-imagine social/cultural/historical spaces anew. As mentioned earlier, other studies have explored audience reception related to social and personal change (Kontos et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011) and many theatre practitioners and performance studies scholars have discussed spectatorship and the aesthetic encounter (Bennett, 1990; Brook, 1968, 1993; Grotowski, 1968). Indeed, nursing scholar and arts-based researcher Gail Mitchell and her colleagues found that audience members felt the impact of the play *I’m Still Here!* in their bodies, describing “being smacked, struck, hit, jolted, moved and hammered” as well as how they came to see or understand other people’s experiences differently (2011, p. 385). These findings suggest embodiment and imagination as integral to the aesthetic encounter; however
they also do not directly consider foolishness. It would be important to observe connections and disconnections between the creative process for a particular research-informed play and the ways audience members come to engage with the performance itself in order to broaden and enrich an aesthetic of relationality.

Additionally, while I have attempted to situate this work within the broader field of arts-based research, this project only includes research-informed theatre as one form of arts-based inquiry. Further study is required to explore whether and how an aesthetic of relationality might include other art forms, such as other performance genres including dance, performance art, opera, film and video, music performance including orchestras and choirs, as well as digital arts, visual arts, and literary arts including fiction and poetry. In addition to this, my case study for this project engaged professional artists, who have been trained to attend to their own embodiment and imagination in particular ways and who articulate themselves using particular discourse. Further study is required to better understand the ways that an aesthetic of relationality might or might not expand to include non-arts professional participants as well as community arts practices such as community/participatory art making, community music and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979).

If we take the example of Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed it is important to consider the different ways that audience/community members engage with the performance itself and what that might mean for an aesthetic of relationality. With Theatre of the Oppressed, which first emerged in the 1970s in South America as a theatre produced by and relevant to socially disempowered citizens (Babbage, 2004), the audience is physically drawn into the action on stage and the line between audience and performance is blurred. The audience member “assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, discusses plans for change” (Boal, 1979, p. 122). It is helpful here to recall earlier discussions about the different relationships between stage-action and audience members with Aristotelian and Brechtian drama. An Aristotelian model of drama is grounded in cathartic experience where an audience member, according to Boal, “delegates power to the dramatic character so that the latter may act and think for him” (Boal, 1979, p. 122). With Brecht’s socially engaged *epic theatre* there is a move away from a cathartic theatre towards a theatre “with the power to provoke social change” and “reactivate stage-audience exchange” through *alienation effect* (Bennett, 1990, p. 22). *Epic theatre* then is a re-visioning of theatre as a vehicle for social and political change and *alienation effect* is the use of theatrical devices within the performance
reminding audience members of the artificiality of the performance and encouraging them to engage critically. From Boal’s perspective, through *epic theatre* an audience member observes actors on stage but “reserves the right to think for himself” (Boal, 1979, p. 122). Theatre of the Oppressed differentiates from both of these approaches in that Boal’s “spectactor” has the opportunity to engage directly with the action on stage as a way to try out politically and personally sensitive or dangerous situations, moving towards political and social change.

Understood as a kind of *rehearsal for reality*, this tangible experience within a fictitious frame provides spectactors the opportunity to experience the empowering and complex act of moving from words and ideas into action (Boal, 1979, pp. 139-142). It is the blurring of the line between audience members and stage-action that is of interest to me in considering the ways that an aesthetic of relationality might be enriched and/or challenged as a theoretical framework. Does the practice of Theatre of the Oppressed and the blurring of the stage-action/audience relationship challenge or strengthen the ways various participants can be understood to playfully extend and/or become foolishly/inventively disrupted? In what ways does an aesthetic of relationality as it is currently conceived, understood as the aesthetic space created when artist-researchers playfully extend and foolishly/inventively disrupt among other people, change when the stage-action/audience relationship is blurred?

With the linked notions of embodiment, imagination and foolishness for artist-researchers, questions additionally open up about how an aesthetic of relationality and this triage of concepts might shed new light on learning more broadly. It could be argued that, as artist-researchers continually attend to and then disrupt their own bodily horizon in order to do that bodily horizon differently, artist-researchers learn about themselves and their relationship to the world. Additionally, through an aesthetic of relationality, audience members are invited to playfully extend towards the story with the potential that they might become foolishly disrupted, reconsidering the relationship between their own bodily horizon and social/cultural/historical spaces. Attention to this ‘bodily horizon - social/cultural/historical spaces’ relationship illuminates the potential for audience members to move into newly imagined social/cultural/historical spaces which can be understood as a kind of learning. With this embodied understanding of learning, questions begin to open up about the ways that imaginatively and foolishly attending to and disrupting our embodiment might inform more formal learning environments, such as classroom pedagogy and curriculum and/or medical education. Further exploration could additionally reveal how an aesthetic of relationality aligns
with or departs from pedagogical approaches that emphasize relationships among teacher, learner and society, such as Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2007).

Further study is also required to better understand the ways that an aesthetic of relationality supports or challenges current, dominant conceptions of knowledge translation. In looking at the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) website for example, they discuss their commitment “to foster a culture of excellence in KT [knowledge translation] and to accelerate transformative changes in health and the health system, with the overall goal of achieving impact” (Research, 2015). Given the discourse used here, including “culture of excellence,” “accelerate transformative changes” and the “goal of achieving impact” it would appear that there are significant differences between dominant approaches to knowledge translation and an aesthetic of relationality which resides in vulnerability, undoing and not knowing, partiality, and posing questions and suggestions rather than finding definitive answers. The notions of embodiment, imagination and foolishness are not even hinted at in this particular statement from CIHR, let alone their broader descriptions of the stages of knowledge translation, including synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and ethically-sound application of knowledge.

Given these initial differences, it would be interesting to further explore the goals and purposes of dominant approaches to knowledge translation, linking these with common knowledge translations strategies (such as pamphlets and lectures), in comparison with the goals and purposes of research-informed theatre framed through an aesthetic of relationality as well as other arts-based approaches. This work would further situate research-informed theatre and an aesthetic of relationality within the broader academy, and potentially encourage those taking up dominant approaches to knowledge translation to re-think assumptions and strategies.
Final words

“To study [as an artist], you enter into a situation with your whole being, you listen and then begin to move around inside it with your imagination. You can study every situation you are in. You can learn to read life while life is happening.”

Anne Bogart, 2001, *A Director Prepares*

“A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.”

Peter Brook, 1968, *The Empty Space*

These quotations above are a return to the quotes that opened this dissertation. I revisit them to highlight several things. First, I would like to note that both Anne Bogart and Peter Brook are not academics, but practicing, highly respected professional theatre artists and teachers. Additionally, both are theatre directors over and above all other artistic hats they must wear as part of their professional lives. The theatre director must attend to all facets of theatre creation and production, focusing them into a cohesive story and picture for audience members, including script, language, bodies, movement, design, use of space, colour, light, physical/spatial relationship to the audience, among others. The director holds a unique multi-faceted position within theatre creation and must attend to exploration in multiple ways within this artistic form; the ways they describe what they attend to in theatre creation offers insight. In her quote, Bogart emphasizes the ways that artists have always been engaged in exploration through our “whole being,” by “listening” and “moving around inside it with your imagination.” She suggests that exploration is not separate from life, but a part of it: “you learn to read life while life is happening.” Brook suggests that theatrical exploration additionally takes place as a person walks, or moves, into a space when someone else is watching. The person alone is insufficient; he must move into a space and someone must be watching. Additionally, nothing ‘fancy’ or excessive is required for an act of theatre to happen; the most important components are people, space, movement/actions, time. I draw on these quotations to highlight the ways that an aesthetic of relationality, as a *scholarly* frame, takes place within and emerges from a particular artistic form: theatre. An aesthetic of relationality provides theoretical conceptualization of a *practice*. It could be argued that the work that artists do has always involved research at the level of art-
making itself (Manning, 2015; Riley & Hunter, 2009). By critically theorizing the practices of artist-researchers as a scholarly form of inquiry as emerging out of artistic practice, I have attempted to respect the roots of those practices while extending the ways we might conceptualize legitimate academic knowledges and the practices that produce them to include the relational engagement of bodies, imagination and foolishness.
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Appendices

Appendix A

Information/Consent Letter to Participants – HEALTH RESEARCHERS

From Researcher, Julia Gray
416-884-6941; Julia.gray@utoronto.ca
Doctoral supervisor: Dr. Pia Kontos
416-597-3422, ext. 7609; pia.kontos@uhn.ca

Date ______________________________

Research Project Title: “My Body is the Pivot of the World”: a phenomenologically-informed qualitative study about research informed theatre.

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD student at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, and my supervisor is Dr. Pia Kontos. I am doing this research as part of the requirement to complete my doctoral thesis. I am approaching you as a member of the research-informed play ‘Cracked: new light on dementia” to see if you might be interested in being involved in my study.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information to help you to understand the nature of my research and to decide whether or not you wish to participate. Participation is completely voluntary, and, should you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without consequence, penalty or judgment. Should you have any concerns about the research, you may at any time contact me or Dr. Kontos (please see our contact information above).

Purpose of the Study

The nature and purpose of the research is to look at how it is that artists (or artist-researchers) draw on their own embodiment (understood as how we come to understand the world through our bodies and lived experiences) and imagination as part of the creation process for research-informed theatre.5

5 By the term ‘research-informed theatre’ I am referring to theatre projects that are created based on ‘research data’ as understood by academics in the sciences and social sciences. Of course, all theatre projects are based on some kind of research, but the term ‘research’ discussed here refers to a specific academic process.
As part of this project I will be looking at the interrelationship between the research findings (including experiences of original research participants such as people with dementia), the artist-researcher, and the intended audience members, and how this interrelationship among people informs how we create research-informed theatre.

The information gathered through this study will help to develop the field of research-informed theatre and provide theoretical support for the choice and development of this work.

**What will your participation involve?**
Your part in the research, if you agree, is:

1) to give permission to use transcripts of recordings of team meetings that took place between our team of researchers in 2011 and 2012. There were six (6) meetings that were recorded and transcribed.

Please know that participation is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time. Your decision to participate in this study, as well as your decision to withdraw at any point in time, will not affect our working relationship. Let me also emphasize that at no time will you be judged or evaluated and at no time will you be at risk of harm and no value judgment will be placed on your decision to withdraw. As individual speakers have not been indicated in transcribed meetings, should you decide to withdraw from the study the transcriptions from all team meetings will not be included in the study in their entirety. The only limitation to the ability to withdraw is that it will not be possible to withdraw once the data has been analysed.

As you may recall, the focus of these meetings was the exploration of the dominant cultural concepts around dementia that our team wanted challenge. Additionally, we explored new concepts for audiences to consider in terms of how the body is fundamental to self-expression, particularly for those with dementia, and how relationships are important for ethical and humanistic care, and are vital. These concepts were grounded in the team member’s programs of research and were being brought together to form the thematic foundation for the play’s development. My interest in using the transcripts from these meetings is to explore whether and in what ways we drew on our embodiment and imagination as part of our discussions.

There are no specific benefits or risks for you to be involved in this study. Potential benefits which you might derive from participating are that you will receive a summary report of the study findings which may be of use to you professionally. Additionally, you will be contributing to the development of a conceptual framework for research-informed theatre, which will inform the choice and development of this work.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**
Only I, the Primary Investigator, and Dr. Pia Kontos, my supervisor, will have access to any of the data. All information collected will be stored on password-protected, secure computers and all other data will be kept in locked cabinets in my office. In the transcripts, names and other identifying information about you (or your organization) will be systematically eliminated, unless you would like me not to (see option at the bottom of the form to make a stipulation). Identifying codes that could connect you (or your organization) with pseudonyms provided will also be kept under lock and key in the place designated above. Upon completion of the study, all data, including all audio tapes, will be archived in a secure, locked location for a maximum of
ten years, then destroyed as per the policy required by the Office of Research Services at the University of Toronto.

I will be sharing key findings of my analysis with you; I will be doing this by sending you a short summary report.

The information from this project will be used for academic presentations and publications. Your words and phrases may be used in reports of the research. As part of these written reports, while I will be identifying the title of the play as ‘Cracked: new light on dementia,’ your identity relating to your responses as part of this study (as opposed to being a member of the play) will remain confidential and you will be identified in publications only by a pseudonym assigned to you. As such, your identity will remain confidential.

Potential limitations in my ability to ensure your confidentiality and privacy are:

- You are a member of the team of ‘Cracked’ and as such your name is already associated with the project.

Because of these limitations, when this research comes to be disseminated, there is a chance a reader/spectator could associate you with the study. I will do everything I can to ensure confidentiality throughout the research process and minimize this chance.

Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, contact the Office of Research Ethics, at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273. Everything that you discuss with them will be kept confidential.

Additional information

Below, there is a place for you to sign to give your consent, should you decide to do so. There is also a place for you to add any stipulations. Should you decide to participate, please return one signed and dated copy to me and keep the other for your records. All participants will receive a summary report of the research findings.

Sincerely,

Julia Gray
PhD Candidate
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
66 Barrington Ave
Toronto, ON M4C 4Z1
(416) 884-6941
julia.gray@utoronto.ca
To Be Completed by People Choosing to Participate

I have read through this document. I understand and am satisfied with the explanations offered, feel that my questions have been addressed, and agree to participate in the ways described.

Exceptions or stipulations to my participation in this study are:

__________________________________ (Signature)
__________________________________ (Printed Name)
__________________________________ (Date)

__________________________________ (Signature of Witness)
__________________________________ (Printed Name of Witness)
__________________________________ (Date)

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix B

Recruitment email to health researchers from me, Principal Investigator

Hi XYZ,

As you know, I’m currently doing my PhD at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My thesis topic focuses on the creative process of developing research-informed theatre, and I’m using ‘Cracked’ as my case study. I’m interested to look at how artist-researchers drew on their embodiment and imagination as part of the process of creation.

I’m wondering if you might be interested in being a participant in my doctoral study. This would entail my using the transcripts from our team meetings we had in 2011 and 2012 as data. I have attached a consent form for your consideration which gives details about the study, your involvement and how the transcripts will be used as part of the study.

If this is something you think you might be comfortable with, I would like to meet with you to provide more information about the study and answer any questions you might have. You can decide at that point if this is something you would like to be involved with.

Let me know your thoughts,
Appendix C

Information/Consent Letter to Participants - ACTORS

From Researcher, Julia Gray  
416-884-6941; Julia.gray@utoronto.ca  

Doctoral supervisor: Dr. Pia Kontos  
416-597-3422, ext. 7609; pia.kontos@uhn.ca

Date ______________________________

Research Project Title: “My Body is the Pivot of the World”: a phenomenologically-informed qualitative study about research informed theatre.

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD student at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), and my supervisor is Dr. Pia Kontos. I am doing this research as part of the requirement to complete my doctoral thesis. I am approaching you as a member of the research-informed play ‘Cracked: new light on dementia’ to see if you might be interested in being involved in my study.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information to help you to understand the nature of my research and to decide whether or not you wish to participate. Participation is completely voluntary, and, should you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without consequence, penalty or judgment. Should you have any concerns about the research, you may at any time contact me or Dr. Kontos (please see our contact information above).

Purpose of the Study
The nature and purpose of the research is to look at how it is that artists (or artist-researchers) draw on their own embodiment (understood as how we come to understand the world through our bodies and lived experiences) and imagination as part of the creation process for research-informed theatre.6

6 By the term ‘research-informed theatre’ I am referring to theatre projects that are created based on ‘research data’ as understood by academics in the sciences and social sciences. Of course, all theatre projects are based on some kind of research, but the term ‘research’ discussed here refers to a specific academic process.
As part of this project I will be looking at the interrelationship between the research findings (including experiences of original research participants such as people with dementia), the artist-researcher, and the intended audience members, and how this interrelationship among people informs how we create research-informed theatre.

The information gathered through this study will help to develop the field of research-informed theatre and provide theoretical support for the choice and development of this work.

**What will your participation involve?**

I would like to interview approximately 4-5 people as part of my research, all of whom have been involved in the development of the research-informed play ‘Cracked: new light on dementia.’ Please know that participation is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time. Your decision to participate in this study, as well as your decision to withdraw at any point in time, will not affect your employment status in relation to the theatre production (i.e. future opportunities to perform the play). Let me also emphasize that at no time will you be judged or evaluated and at no time will you be at risk of harm and no value judgment will be placed on your responses or your decision to withdraw.

Your part in the research, if you agree, is:

1) To speak with me about your experiences with creating research-informed theatre in an interview. The interview will be informal, will last approximately one to one and a half (1 to 1.5) hours and can take place at a location convenient to you (for example, your home or at OISE/UT). I am interested to video tape these interviews in order to capture your embodied expression beyond words/language. I’ve enclosed some questions that I’m interested to ask you, and,

2) to give permission to use transcripts of a previous interview after an Arts Workshop in November, 2012 for the purposes of my study. The original interview was conducted for a different purpose and I would like to re-analyze these interview transcripts for a secondary purpose, and

3) to give permission to use video footage of rehearsals, works-in-progress presentation in June 2013, and a preview performance in November 2013

Areas which I hope to touch on in our interview are: your experience with research-informed theatre, how you engage your own body in the process of relating to the experiences of research participants (like, people with dementia) and creating research-informed theatre; the ways in which you engage your imagination as part of the creative process; the ways you think about the audience as part of the creative process.

You should know that you have the right not to respond to interview questions if they are not comfortable with. If you decide to withdraw, I can still observe the performances of those who have given permission in video footage of rehearsals, works-in-progress presentation and preview performance – I will not consider your performance in my analysis. The only limitation to the ability to withdraw is that it will not be possible to withdraw once the data has been analysed. Should you decide you do not want to participate in the study after this time, regardless that I have included your interview and video-footage of you in my analysis, I will not include any quotes from your interview in presentations or publications, nor will I show any video footage of your performance at any presentations.
There are some risks to being involved in this study – there is a chance that questions could cause distress and there is a risk to privacy (see below for more information on privacy and confidentiality). Because of our pre-existing relationship, there is the potential for you to feel pressure to participate in the study and there is also the potential for you to feel uncomfortable sharing information about your experiences about being involved in the development of Cracked. Please know that you do not have to answer any questions in our interview that you are not comfortable with. Benefits to being involved in the study include that you may further clarify your own thinking on the topic, and you will receive a summary report of the study findings which may be of use to you.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

Only I, the Primary Investigator, and Dr. Pia Kontos, my supervisor, will have access to any of the data. All information collected will be stored on password-protected, secure computers and all other data will be kept in locked cabinets in my office. In the transcripts of your interview, names and other identifying information about you (or your organization) will be systematically eliminated, unless you would like me not to (see option at the bottom of the form to make a stipulation). Identifying codes that could connect you (or your organization) with pseudonyms provided will also be kept under lock and key in the place designated above. Upon completion of the study, all data, including all audio and video tapes, will be archived in a secure, locked location for a maximum of ten years, then destroyed as per the policy required by the Office of Research Services at the University of Toronto.

As interviewee, you will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview. Any section which you request to have deleted from the transcript of your interview will be deleted. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and you may request that the entire transcript of your interview be destroyed. Additionally, you may choose not to answer any question in the interview and also choose to end the interview at any time. I will be sharing key findings of my analysis with you; I will be doing this by sending you a short summary report.

The information from this project will be used for academic presentations and publications. Your words and phrases may be used in reports of the research. As part of these written reports, while I will be identifying the title of the play as ‘Cracked: new light on dementia,’ your identity relating to your responses as part of this study (as opposed to being a member of the play) will remain confidential and you will be identified in publications only by a pseudonym assigned to you. In addition using your words and phrases, video footage (of the interview, of rehearsal, of works-in-progress presentation, of preview performance) may be used as part of presentations (for educational purposes) and your identity will be disclosed. If this is a concern, you can stipulate that you do not give permission for video footage of you to be used as part of presentations.

Potential limitations in my ability to ensure your confidentiality and privacy are:

- You are a member of the team of ‘Cracked’ and as such your name is already associated with the project,
- As described above, video footage used as part of future presentations will disclose your identity

I will do everything I can to ensure confidentiality throughout the research process and minimize the chance of loss of privacy.
Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, contact the Office of Research Ethics, at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273. Everything that you discuss with them will be kept confidential.

Additional information

Below there is a place for you to mark how you would like to be involved in this study and sign to give your consent, should you decide to do so. There is also a place for you to add any stipulations. Should you decide to participate, please return one signed and dated copy to me and keep the other for your records. All participants will receive a summary report of the research findings.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julia Gray
PhD Candidate
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
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Research Scientist
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(416) 597-3422 ext. 7609
Pia.kontos@uhn.ca

To Be Completed by those Choosing to Participate

I have read through this document. I understand and am satisfied with the explanations offered, feel that my questions have been addressed, and agree to participate in the ways described.
[ ] I would like to be interviewed as part of this study

[ ] I agree to be videotaped as part of my interview

[ ] I give permission for the transcripts of a previous interview after an Arts Workshop in November, 2012 may be used for the purposes of this study

I give permission for previously recorded video footage to be used for the purposes of this study:
  [ ] of rehearsals
  [ ] of a June 2013 works-in-progress presentation
  [ ] of a November 2013 preview performance

Exceptions or stipulations to my participation in this study are:

__________________________________ (Signature)
__________________________________ (Printed Name)
__________________________________ (Date)

__________________________________ (Signature of Witness)
__________________________________ (Printed Name of Witness)
__________________________________ (Date)

Please keep a copy for your records.
Appendix D

Initial email contact by research colleague to actors

Hi ACTOR NAME,

My name is XYZ and I am writing to see if you might be interested in being involved in a research study about research-informed theatre called “‘My Body is the Pivot of the World”: a phenomenologically-informed qualitative study of the creative process of research-informed theatre.’ I understand you were involved in the development of the research-informed play ‘Cracked’ – ‘Cracked’ is the case study for this research project in order to look at how it is that artist-researchers draw on their own experiences and engage their imagination as part of the creative process.

If you think this is something you’d like to be involved with, perhaps I can send you an information sheet which has more details about what your involvement would look like. In essence, there are a number of ways you can choose to be involved such as being interviewed, giving permission for the use of transcripts of the interview you did after the Arts Workshop Day with people with dementia in November 2012, as well as give permission to look at video footage from rehearsals, from the works-in-progress presentation in June 2013 and a preview performance from November 2013.

You should know that whether you choose to be involved in this study or not will in no way affect your working relationship with the rest of the ‘Cracked’ team nor any future employment with the production.

Let me know if you’d be interested to see the information sheet.

Kindly,

ANSWER: No thanks.
RESPONSE from colleague: OK, no problem. Thanks for getting back to me.

ANSWER: Yes, sounds great.
RESPONSE from colleague: OK, great.

I’ve attached the consent form for you to take a look at.

I should let you know that the Principal Investigator for this study is Julia Gray, the playwright and director for ‘Cracked.’ This study is her PhD research project. You might be wondering why Julia herself hasn’t been in touch – the reason is that she’s concerned that you not feel any pressure to be involved. She values your working relationship and your friendship, and the hope is that by having me make this initial contact, it will give you a bit of space to think about whether this is something you’d like to be a part of. She also wants to make it clear that, should you decide you don’t want to be involved, your future involvement in ‘Cracked’ will in no way
be affected. She’s got lots of material to work with even if you decide not to participate, but would also love the chance to sit down with you to hear what you have to say. It’s really up to you.

Once you’ve had the chance to read the information sheet, perhaps we can find a time to have a phone conversation where we can go over everything in detail and you can ask any questions of me.

Kindly,

ANSWER: No thanks.
RESPONSE from colleague: OK, no problem. Thanks for your time.

ANSWER: Sounds great, let’s find a time to talk.
RESPONSE from colleague: Great.

Why don’t you send me your telephone number and a few times that work for you and we’ll see if we can find a good time to talk.

Kindly,
Hi XYZ,

It’s XYZ calling about the study about research-informed theatre. Is this still a good time to talk?

ANSWER: NO
RESPONSE: OK, no problem, should we find another time to chat?

ANSWER: YES
RESPONSE: Great.

I thought it might be a good idea to go over the consent form in some detail, but before that, I wonder if you have any initial questions.

ANSWER: Yes – asks specific question.
RESPONSE from colleague: Answers question based on script below.

ANSWER: No, let’s go through the consent form.
RESPONSE from colleague: OK great.

I thought we could start by going over the study objectives, or why the study is being conducted. The study itself is looking at the ways that artist-researchers put themselves in the middle of the creative process and draw on their own embodied ways of knowing as part of the interpretive and analytic process, as well as how they engage their imaginations. This may sound obvious to you as an artist, but in the academy (especially in health) this idea of implicating yourself personally in your research or work is newer. Julia’s interest through her PhD is to take a closer look at how it is that the artistic process might be a research process.

Your involvement
In order to do this, there are a few ways that you can choose to be involved in this study. The most time consuming thing would be an interview with Julia about your experiences of being involved in a research-informed play – this would be about an hour to an hour and a half and would be videotaped. In addition to that, you can also give permission for Julia to look at the transcripts of the interview you did after the Arts Workshop Day with people with dementia in November 2012, as well as give permission for her to look at video footage from rehearsals, from the works-in-progress presentation in June 2013 and a preview performance from November 2013. Julia is interested in videotaping your interview so she can analyse body language across the different video data (interviews, rehearsal footage, works-in-progress presentation, preview performance).
You can choose to be involved in all of these ways or only just some of them – for example, maybe you’re OK with Julia looking at the video footage, but you don’t want to be interviewed. That is all OK; you are the one in control of what material can be used.

Withdrawal
You should know that, if you decide you want to be interviewed, you have the right not to respond to interview questions they are not comfortable with and you can stop the interview at any time. Also, if you decide to withdraw, Julia will still be able to observe the performances of those who have given permission in video footage of rehearsals, works-in-progress presentation and preview performance – in this case, she will not consider your performance in her analysis.

The only limitation to the ability to withdraw is that it will not be possible to withdraw once the data has been analysed. Should you decide do not want to participate in the study after this time, even though she will have included your interview and video-footage of you in her analysis, when it comes time to disseminate (so, publications or conference presentations) she will not include any quotes from your interview, nor will she show any video footage of your performance at any presentations.

Risks/Benefits
You should know that there are some risks to being involved in this study – there is a chance that interview questions could cause distress and there is a risk to privacy – I’ll go over the risks to privacy in a second.

Also, because of your pre-existing relationship with Julia, there is the potential for you to feel pressure to participate in the study and there is also the potential for you to feel uncomfortable sharing information about your experiences about being involved in the development of Cracked. Please know that you do not have to answer any questions in your interview that you are not comfortable with.

There are also benefits to being involved in the study – specifically, by being interviewed you may have the chance to further clarify your own thinking on your artistic process and research-informed theatre in general. Julia will also send you a summary report of the study findings which may be of interest to you.

Privacy/Confidentiality
All information collected will be stored on password-protected, secure computers and all other data will be kept in locked cabinets in Julia’s office. Julia and her PhD supervisor, Pia Kontos, will be the only ones who will have access to this information.

In the transcripts of your interview, names and other identifying information about you (or your organization) will be systematically eliminated. If you want to be identified, there is space at the bottom of the consent form to make that stipulation.

Anything that might identify you will be given a pseudonym – like, your name or place of work. These pseudonyms will also be kept under lock and key in Julia’s office. When the study is finished, all data, including all audio and video tapes, will be archived in a secure, locked location for a maximum of ten years, then destroyed as per the policy required by the Office of Research Services at the University of Toronto.
You will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview. Once you’ve had the chance to look at your transcript, if there is any section which you would like to have deleted from the transcript will be deleted. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time, you may request that the entire transcript of your interview be destroyed.

You should also know that the information from this project will be used for academic presentations and publications. For example, your words and phrases may be used in reports of the research. Of course, you are a member of the play’s team, and Julia will be using the play’s title in her publications and presentations – because of this, there is the possibility that your identity will be revealed because of your association with the play.

However, your identity relating to your responses as part of this study (as opposed to being a member of the play) will remain confidential and you will be identified in publications only by the pseudonym assigned to you.

You should also be aware that Julia would like to use video footage (of the interview, of rehearsal, of works-in-progress presentation, of preview performance) as part of presentations (for educational purposes) and in this situation your identity will be disclosed. If you are concerned about this, you can stipulate that you do not give permission for video footage of you to be used as part of presentations (but can be included as part of the study and Julia’s analysis).

Bottom line: Julia will do everything she can to ensure confidentiality throughout the research process and minimize the chance of loss of privacy.

If this all sounds OK, then I can pass your email address along to Julia and she can email you to set up a time for your interview (should you want to be interviewed). At that point you can sign the consent form and decide if and how you’d like to be involved. By saying yes to me now, you’re not engraving anything in stone, you’re really just giving permission for Julia to get in touch with you directly.

Does that sound OK?

ANSWER: NO, not interested.
RESPONSE: OK, no problem, thanks for your time!

ANSWER: YES, sounds good.
RESPONSE: OK, great.

I’ll let Julia know and she can email you to set up a meeting time.

Recruitment email to actors from me, Principal Investigator

Hi XYZ,

I’m really pleased you had the chance to speak with XYZ.
Just to go over what XYZ mentioned during your call, my thesis topic focuses on the creative process of developing research-informed theatre, and I’m using ‘Cracked’ as my case study. I’m interested to look at how artist-researchers drew on their embodiment and imagination as part of the process of creation.

As XYZ also mentioned during your call, there are a number of ways you can choose to be involved in the study – you can choose to be interviewed which would be videotaped, give permission for me to use the transcripts of the previous interview you did after the Arts Day in November, 2012, as well as the video footage we took as part of our rehearsals, of the works-in-progress presentation in June 2013 and the preview performance in November 2013. You can choose to be involved in all of these ways, or only just some of them – for example, maybe you’re OK with me looking at the video footage, but you don’t want to be interviewed. I am OK with however you choose to be involved, should you choose to do so.

I should add that being involved in my study is completely voluntary and will not affect future employment with ‘Cracked’ in any way. I am extending interview offers to all actors (7 in total) but only expect to interview 4-5 – I mention this only to alleviate any sense of pressure on your part to be involved. I’d really like to speak with you about ‘Cracked,’ but please know that my study will continue if you decide not to participate.

If this project still looks like something you’d like to be involved with, let’s find a time to meet in person and I can answer any additional questions you might have. You can decide at that point if this is something you would like to be involved with and the letter can be signed then. If you’d like to be interviewed, we can have our talk then too.

Let me know your thoughts.
Appendix E

Interview Guide

For the interviews with the actors of *Cracked*, here are some sample interview questions and prompts:

1) In what ways did you begin to understand the research findings, including the experiences of research participants? *(prompt: What was your creative entry point into *Cracked*? How did you relate to the research participants (persons with dementia, for example)? Do you use your own body or own personal experiences as a way to understand?)

2) In what ways did you use your imagination to understand the research findings, including the experiences of research participants? *(prompt: If a research participant’s experience was vastly different from your own, how did you relate to them? Can you think of a specific example from our process when you were having trouble relating to or understanding a particular experience of the research participants? How did you overcome this?)

3) How did you draw on your own embodied experience to move your understanding of the research findings, including the research participant’s experiences, into *Cracked*/dramatic form? *(prompt: How did you move from your process of understanding the experiences of research participants into the performance itself? What did you do physically or emotionally to move from your understanding of their experiences into the performance?)

4) In what ways did you think about or understand the audience as part of the creation process? *(prompt: How do you draw on your own experiences of being an audience member as part of the creative process? How does thinking about the audience influence your performance? When is it useful *not* to think about the audience? Why or why not?)
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