

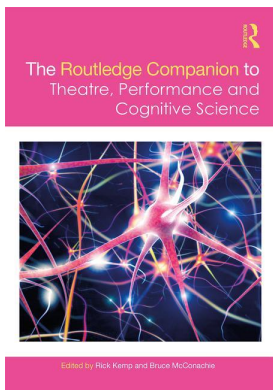
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On: 16 Jan 2019

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Theatre, Performance, and Cognitive Science

Rick Kemp, Bruce McConachie

Creative Storytelling, Crossing Boundaries, High-Impact Learning and Social Engagement

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315169927-16>

Nancy Kindelan

Published online on: 05 Sep 2018

How to cite :- Nancy Kindelan. 05 Sep 2018, *Creative Storytelling, Crossing Boundaries, High-Impact Learning and Social Engagement from: The Routledge Companion to Theatre, Performance, and Cognitive Science* Routledge

Accessed on: 16 Jan 2019

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315169927-16>

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CREATIVE STORYTELLING, CROSSING BOUNDARIES, HIGH-IMPACT LEARNING AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Nancy Kindelan

The pedagogy of theatre studies is by its very nature multidimensional and cross-disciplinary. Its immersive teaching and learning strategies can help students address ‘big questions’ through cultivating inquiry-driven learners whose problem-solving skills enrich their cultural understanding and promote civic responsibility. This essay explores how a theatre class was designed to help all undergraduates approach life’s unscripted problems through high-impact educational practices and metacognitive strategies in order to understand and manage some of the significant issues associated with twenty-first-century learning, such as complexity, diversity, flexibility and social change.

Many courses in dramatic literature, history and theory as well as theatre’s experiential activities adhere to the ‘Principles,’ ‘Essential Learning Outcomes’ and ‘High-Impact’ learning strategies recommended by the Association of American Colleges and Universities initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). Launched in 2005, LEAP has guided educators who are committed to developing powerful, high-impact educational practices that help all college students become intentional in their learning in order to prepare to become knowledgeable and responsible citizens and valuable contributors to a global economy (See Association of American Colleges and Universities 2008, 2015).

LEAP supports high-quality learning through achieving specific twenty-first-century ‘Essential Learning Outcomes’ such as ‘knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world,’ ‘intellectual and practical skills,’ ‘personal and social responsibility,’ ‘integrative and applied learning.’ Theatre pedagogy champions many of LEAP’s outcomes through using plays to explore human nature as well as to develop new ways to think about human dignity, freedom and diverse cultures. Students are provided with opportunities to develop intellectual and practical skills, to confront complex real-world problems and social challenges through an in-depth or capstone project. Described by the ‘LEAP Challenge’ as ‘Signature Work,’ these problem-based projects demonstrate how students acquired skills, insights and knowledge to help them develop the capacity to explore and share their findings with others (AAC&U 2015).

As defined by LEAP, high-impact practices, known as HIPs, include a variety of learning experiences such as first-year seminars, capstone courses and projects, thematic learning communities, writing-intensive classes, collaborative projects, intercultural programs, service

learning/community projects and internships. 'High-Impact Educational Practices' encourage students to explore 'big questions.' HIPs strategies involve students in challenging, engaging, evidence-based activities where learning becomes intentional and students become informed, responsible and empowered learners (Kuh 2008, 9–11).

Following the lead of George D. Kuh's findings (2008) about the success of HIPs in higher education, this essay demonstrates how HIPs played a significant role in the development of a collaborative, intra- /interdisciplinary, immersive, project-based honours class that culminated in the creation of a 'Treatment' for a contemporary Living Newspaper play. This documentary form of theatre utilises historical facts, authentic interviews, videos, original dramatic scenes and innovative theatrical practices to promote social consciousness and responsible social action. As such, HIPs, seen through the lens of theatre pedagogy, are analogous to metacognitive experiences, which required my non-theatre majors to develop metacognitive skills in order to complete the assigned cognitive task.

Generally, metacognition refers to self-awareness about our cognitive processes and our ability to regulate cognitive skills for more affective learning (Flavell 1979). In 'Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring,' Flavell proposed that metacognitive knowledge is beneficial in helping 'to select, evaluate, revise, and abandon cognitive tasks, goals, and strategies' in light of the project at hand. Metacognitive knowledge can 'lead to' metacognitive experiences that involve 'self, tasks, goals, and strategies' that help in interpreting 'the meaning and behavioural implications of these metacognitive experiences' (908). Flavell also suggests that the interplay between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences might cause students to assess their feelings that their goals are difficult to achieve whereupon they may employ the metacognitive strategy of asking questions of more knowledgeable people (mentors) to help them achieve the desired outcome.

The authentic experience of writing a Treatment for a Living Newspaper included 'situated modeling, coaching, and fading' (See Brown, Collins, and Duguid) and cognitive 'apprenticeship' opportunities (Rogoff 1990). Viewed as a group of 'active learners' (Rogoff, 39, 198), the students' work on their subsequent creative projects was continuously challenged, supported and guided by numerous mentors, visiting guest professors and myself, until they were empowered to complete the task. The social interaction between mentors and students allowed the novice artists 'to participate in skills beyond those that [they are] independently capable of handling.' Rogoff maintains that working closely with an expert who has intellectual tools follows Vygotsky's theory of social influence as a contributing factor to cognitive development and as such resembles apprenticeship (Rogoff, 140–1). Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning occurs by interacting with others in active learning environments that include guided mentorship.

The Living Newspaper project allowed students to participate intentionally, metacognitively and behaviourally in a process that involved self-regulated learning: identifying a topic, setting reasonable goals, careful planning, questioning, monitoring and evaluating. For example, after selecting their topics students began the metacognitive reflective practice of how to incorporate facts and journalistic interviews and where revision was needed. Individual metacognitive experiences often called for additional cognitive strategies (more research), which then led to deeper learning tactics (additional discussions and guided mentorship) that eventually improved the play's narrative or dramatic techniques. Throughout the cognitive task at hand, metacognitive experiences provided opportunities for reflection and monitoring the quality of their projects. Asking questions about the social conflicts in their projects and listening to the targeted comments of their instructors,

mentors and peers as they evaluated each of the successive iterations of their creative projects became a very comfortable standard that led to further thinking about the social purpose of their work.

Reflective ePortfolio journals helped my novice artists take control of their learning and diminish their fears that they were incapable of writing a Treatment for a Living Newspaper. For example, students received frequent feedback from other members in the learning community: we reviewed their numerous online iterations and helped them assess what was working and not working. For example, later in this essay I describe how a student found it necessary to reconsider her initial response to a social issue, reframe her original questions or arguments and find ways to move beyond a surface understanding of the play's topic. Because work in the course was presented as a journey (process over product) and the written 'Treatment' for a Living Newspaper was not a fully developed play script, non-theatre students became more comfortable creating an artistic project that involved subjects that were controversial, methods of learning that were unfamiliar and documentary forms of theatre that encouraged civic responsibility. A supportive environment of learners helped these students move beyond their comfort zones and discover how to learn in social contexts.

High-impact educational practices and metacognition strategies in the development of a Living Newspaper play

HIPs strategies that encourage critical, reflective, integrative and collaborative educational practices helped students think about and develop authentic stage-worthy dramatic techniques and images capable of communicating real-world problems. The creative activity of researching and writing a Treatment for a twenty-first-century Living Newspaper play advanced 'intentional, informed, responsible, and empowered' learning through the supportive course-based community of learners.

My course began by having students write a series of analytical and reflective papers about the development of various forms of socially responsible theatre. These examples provided various models for their understanding of the cultural traditions and methods of Living Newspaper plays. The student's version of a contemporary Living Newspaper involved transferring what they had learnt from one context to another.

Learning became even more 'intentional' for the students when they were asked to write and present a preliminary statement about what specific social issue or question they would use to frame their play. Their Purpose Proposal was informed by rigorous undergraduate research strategies, which included inquiry-based information gathering substantiated by cross-departmental connections with faculty mentors, interviews with experts in the field and the critical analysis and synthesis of all pertinent fact-finding information. The process of transferring their knowledge about the journalistic tools employed in prior Living Newspaper plays and their research into a thought-provoking and engaging Living Newspaper 'artefact' (a Treatment) involved multiple iterations. Through participating in group creative explorations, collaborative self-assessment assignments and interdisciplinary discussions, students considered various ways to clarify their play's dramatic structure and explore the hidden psychological world of their characters. Because they were involved in creating a Treatment for a *contemporary* Living Newspaper play within the culture and community of learners, students individually and collectively pondered and discussed in class and online whether their selected presentational form of theatre (its dramatic structure and performance strategies) had the potential to engage the audience in civic action.

Historical/theoretical foundations and contemporary reverberations

Since the early twentieth century, there have been numerous forms of documentary theatre. These range from the Epic style of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht to the Living Newspaper plays of the 1930s, to contemporary performance groups, such as Pop-Up Magazines (a 2009 U.S. form of ‘performed journalism’ and a similar version involving *Guardian* journalists and the British Royal Court Theatre makers), to the Tectonic Theater Project and the Living Newspaper festivals sponsored by a Chicago-based company, the Jackalope Theatre.

My recent Honours Inquiry course, ‘Creative Social Engagement: The Rebirth of the Living Newspaper,’ concentrated on three forms of documentary theatre: the 1930s Living Newspapers of the Federal Theatre Project, Anna Deavere Smith’s journalistic performance art work, and the artists’ collaborative, Rimini Protokoll, which uses theatrical tools (e.g., site-specific theatre and living installations) to expand the audience’s notion of life experiences through a new form of documentary theatre. These models provided the dramatic and theatrical contexts for understanding and envisioning possible forms for my students’ Living Newspaper projects.

Through deep readings of two plays and writing critical analyses that focused on the dramatic form and theatrical images found in the Federal Theatre Project’s *One-Third of a Nation* (squalid housing conditions) and the 2000 film version of Anna Deavere Smith’s *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (L.A. race riots), students identified, examined and appraised how the staging of these plays revealed relevant social issues. In addition, Rimini Protokoll’s *Situation Rooms*, *Remote Houston*, and *Remote L.A.* were also discussed to contextualise how these experimental twenty-first-century documentary forms of theatre serve to illustrate, by comparison, the evolution of documentary theatre.

The course was divided into three reflective stages. Each stage emphasised some aspect of the learning journey, including being led by metacognitive knowledge that triggered additional metacognitive experiences such as participating in guided mentorship, engaging in group activities, and ePortfolio reflective activities to see if what was learnt was successful in creating a sense of the whole. In Stage One of this course, students described, examined, differentiated and evaluated numerous examples of documentary theatre, which provided models for their thinking about their contemporary Living Newspaper projects.

Stage One

Yesterday’s social theatre: the Living Newspaper

Through analytical papers, students demonstrated their knowledge about why the original Living Newspaper, its purpose and theatrical techniques, continues to inspire today’s theatre practitioners interested in innovative ways to dramatise social ideas. Their reflections influenced their Treatments, especially the ways they would use journalistic tools to achieve the experiential goals of the class.

What was the Living Newspaper? This documentary form of theatre with unique production values was part of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) programme sponsored by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration. The FTP originated during the Great Depression as a way to accommodate thousands of unemployed journalists and theatre artists. As director of the FTP, Hallie Flanagan supported a visionary, sometimes controversial, form of journalistic theatre that offered economic relief and provided the audience with a deeper understanding of how national, economic and human rights struggles

had affected a diverse population. These projects employed an editorial staff of journalists who assiduously researched, documented and distilled current events and topics of ongoing interest. The Living Newspaper projects used facts to bring current events to life in an effort to educate and to empower their audiences to become socially responsible. For example, *Triple-A Plowed Under* (1936) covered, in 26 scenes, the personal, economic and political plight of drought-stricken farmers during the 1920s and early 1930s. *One-Third of a Nation* (1938) pursued, in approximately 20 scenes, the social, economic and political history of crowded, unsafe, unsanitary housing conditions in U.S. metropolitan slums.

The Living Newspaper's dramatic structure and topics made it possible to hire hundreds of unemployed actors and journalists across the U.S.A. And the Living Newspaper's version of modern morality plays discovered a way to dramatise the news, facts and human struggles in strikingly theatrical ways. The FTP found contemporary European presentational staging techniques best suited the Living Newspaper's documentary form and numerous scenes. Episodic staccato scenes mimicked the rhythm of the 1930s rapid-fire newsreels. Interlocking platforms facilitated multiple scene changes and simultaneous action; metaphorical staging conveyed social messages; scenes that ended with a punch line emphasised the play's ideas; directional light, shadows and blackouts stressed thought over emotion; music underscored specific concepts; symbolic characters created the essence of status over the nuance of psychological development and the voice of a narrator provided commentary. Finally, the use of carefully placed informational slides and documentary films made sure that the audience's attention remained focused on the play's message.

Untold stories: the documentary theatre of Anna Deavere Smith

Students continued their analytical work by demonstrating through group discussions and papers why Anna Deavere Smith's innovative documentary theatre has created a new form of theatre that encourages civic discourse. Smith's artistic vision and her virtuoso performances are evident in works such as *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities* (1992), *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1993–1994), *Let Me Down Easy* (2008–2010) and *Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education* (2015–2016).

In Smith's memoir, *Talk to Me: Listening Between the Lines* (2000), she provides insights into the purpose behind her new form of theatre and the strategies she uses to develop her one-woman shows. Her goal is to seek ways to strengthen the role the arts play in understanding the essence of the 'American character' through listening carefully to the words of all its citizens. Smith acknowledges that we live in a 'communications revolution' and that we have 'a need to communicate'; however, she is concerned about our ability to communicate, to discuss difference, to leave our familiar houses of personal identity, to take the time to hear deeply, to analyse and to trust the unique voices of others. Smith's journey to create a socially responsible theatre involves leaving what is familiar to her, such as family, race, class, nation and professional sphere of expertise. She explains:

When you leave your safe house, you will end up standing someplace in the road. I would call these places that are without houses crossroads of ambiguity. On the one hand, they are not comfortable places. On the other hand, in them one acquires the freedom to move.

In Smith's journey to discover the essence of the 'American character' through the diversity of its citizens, she has 'moved across many cultural boundaries' (Smith 2000, 24).

Since the early 1980s, Anna Deavere Smith has been creating a series of one-woman performance pieces, which are part of a much larger personal journey, *On the Road: A Search for American Character*. Her pioneering one-woman documentary theatre includes a collage of individuals who represent diverse backgrounds and levels of authority. Their stories either provide the audience with varied perceptions on urban, racial and class conflicts, which are responsible for shaping and reshaping the nation, or offer multiple angles to explore the human condition. In some of her work, Smith explores the following ‘big questions.’ Is there a common citizenship? Can we negotiate racial and ethnic difference? Are we paying enough attention to the well-being of our youth? She believes raising these questions will encourage thought about oppression, will lessen the anxiety that comes with talking about difficult issues involving race, community and identity and will generate social action.

In a single performance piece, Anna Deavere Smith may portray several dozen people selected from hundreds of her interviews. Her theatre has a journalistic style and is often referred to as a ‘one-person documentary.’ Smith begins her creative process by interviewing and recording individuals whose words and physical gestures convey authentic impressions about the psychological and social complexity of their lives. Her unique form of documentary theatre has been referred to as ‘verbatim theatre’ because she uses the interviewee’s *exact* words when she portrays that person’s persona on stage. She studies not only what people say, but also how they say it. In her interviews, she looks for the ‘extraordinarily communicative moment’ when she hears, for example, the breakdown of syntax. Her portrayals not only capture the exact words and speech patterns of her interviewees but also include their intermittent coughs, laughter, pauses and ums. Smith works against Stanislavsky’s method of acting, which trains actors to create characters from the inside out; her outside-in approach relies on how the act of speaking reveals something truthful about the individual’s identity (See Smith 2000, 7–12).

Performance art emphasises a minimal approach to stage and costume design. In Smith’s work, the focus is on the artist who conveys, mostly through language, a plethora of different individuals by simply changing a hat or a piece of clothing and/or moving to a different part of the stage. Smith’s performance pieces may include symbolic set pieces, descriptive videos or thought-provoking images that help the audience contextualise the historical event or say something specific about its social ideas. For example, in the 1993 design of the Mark Taper Forum production of *Twilight: Los Angeles*, Smith performed in front of a ‘25-foot white wall with a bay-window-sized opening.’ Daniel B. Wood’s review notes that the opening ‘serves as graffiti-covered window, living-room backdrop, or video-monitor bank.’ He adds that

perhaps the evening’s most poignant moments coincide with her use of the well-known 82-second tape of the King beating [by four L.A. police officers on March 3, 1991], and local news footage of rioting, including the beating of truck driver Reginald Denny [which occurred after the policemen were acquitted at the Simi Valley trial on April 29, 1992].

(The Christian Science Monitor, July 8, 1993)

Anna Deavere Smith’s performance art creates a theatre experience that encourages artistic democracy—the coming together of people to discuss issues that have community value. Therefore, her performance pieces offer the audience various points of identification to encourage the building of bridges about such topics as race, ethnic, health and gender issues. Smith’s theatre presents the audience with questions not answers, multiple opinions on the same topic and dialectical arguments. To facilitate her view of artistic democracy, she often

includes post-play conversations so that there is the opportunity for the audience to express their opinions about what they heard and saw on stage.

'Theatre of Real People': today's Living Newspapers

Lastly, students expanded their frame of reference by focusing on the theatre of Rimini Protokoll, an internationally known artists' collective, based in Berlin, Germany, founded by Stefan Kaegi, Helgard Haug and Daniel Wetzel. Trained in Applied Theatre Studies, this team of equals works both individually and collaboratively. They see themselves as authors/directors who produce eclectic contemporary and experimental theatre forms that involve film, audio-installation, mobile technology and new theatrical tools (living interactive installations). Since its inception in 2002, the group has created over 50 productions on social issues that span a wide range of life experiences such as war, global market economy, capitalism, unemployment, old age, dying and death. In *Experts of the Everyday: The Theatre of Rimini Protokoll*, Florian Malzacher explains that while there is joy in their collaborative spirit, Rimini Protokoll is a 'brand name that facilitates communication, an effective working network, an umbrella organisation without an official statement of intent, that maintains separate accounts even today.' With no one artist/genius at the helm, their strengths come from 'their differences not from the similarities that have grown over the years' (Malzacher 2008, 21).

The collective is interested in pursuing experimental dramaturgies that involve documentary and literary methods that encourage deep thinking and interconnectivity. Instead of actors, they enlist non-professional performers, who in the past were called 'experts' and are now called 'protagonists.' They view their performers as 'experts of everyday life.' One of Rimini Protokoll's goals is to develop 'new theatrical realities' that expand traditional definitions of what a stage is and 'allow for unusual perspectives' about how we perceive reality. To that end, many of Rimini Protokoll's theatre experiences do not occur in a traditional theatre, but instead use locations that represent some facet of our life that isn't acknowledged or appreciated (a tour of our home town, someone's living room, a cemetery, the back of a transparent freight truck, etc.). Daniela Hahn suggests that walking tours of a city have been turned into 'sites of artistic investigation' when theatre events moved to streets and buildings and away from 'institutionalized spaces for the arts' (Hahn 2014, 31). Stefan Kaegi and Jörg Karrenbauer, organizers for *Remote Houston* (2016), describe the experience of exploring the city (on foot and by public transportation) for approximately two hours with the help of a guided audio tour:

With recordings and soundscapes taking over your ears, the cityscape of Houston turns into your personal film. As you move along, the voice in your headphones becomes a more active participant, [an] artificial intelligence exploring human activity, and you are the vehicle for that exploration.

(Alley Theatre, 'Remote Houston')

Rimini Protokoll has been credited with inventing a twenty-first-century form of documentary theatre, which Florian Malzacher describes as 'one in which the conventional notion of objective documentary is juxtaposed with very subjective experiences, in which the individual and the social are brought together in a way that expands both objective and subjective perception' (Malzacher 2010, 80–1). More interested in people than in facts, Rimini Protokoll differs from the 1930s Living Newspaper documentary theatre or Anna Deavere Smith's one-person 'verbatim' documentary theatre since this artist collaborative often alters its interview material for presentational purposes. A company member since

2005, Jörg Karrenbauer explains: 'We take over people's stories at a certain moment. We rearrange them, cut them and extend them. It's not always true, what they say onstage. It's not necessarily their experience of life' (as quoted in Trueman 2016). The final narrative becomes a 'literary blending' of actual interviews, research and the behaviour and motivations of people who are involved in a particular situation. Rimini Protokoll has reinvented documentary theatre and the Living Newspaper to respond to the 'digital age.'

Situation Rooms is an extreme example of how Rimini Protokoll 'blends' the narration of the 'participants/inhabitants' and the experiences of the 'audience/players.' Rimini Protokoll calls *Situation Rooms* a 'multi-player video piece' where the 'players,' the audience members, are called 'spectators.' The setting for the piece consists of a labyrinth of rooms and environments that mirror the actual spaces where 20 people ('inhabitants') from a variety of continents tell their stories (on video) of how their lives have been shaped by weapons. The spectators carry iPads which they have been given prior to entering the maze of rooms, on which they listen to the personal narratives of the 'inhabitants' and are guided through their reconstructed environments, as a disembodied voice instructs them on where to go and what to do, and as they view the inhabitants speak from the actual environments where they recorded their stories¹ (Haug, Kaegi, and Wetzel 2013). As the relationships of the participants/inhabitants/audience/players are blurred, as boundaries are crossed, a new and deeper understanding of the weapons industry is developed.

Stage Two

Research and creative exploration

In Stage Two of this course, students built on their knowledge of these three model documentary theatre forms and applied their understanding of the historical and contemporary forms of Living Newspapers as they contemplated and wrote their own version of a Living Newspaper play. Metacognitive experiences, high-impact educational practices and scaffolding experiences (e.g., apprenticeship models) helped students think about, integrate knowledge and participate in discussing, examining and revising their plays. The collaborative learning community provided a creative and supportive environment for students to develop social awareness and interpersonal skills. In this atmosphere, students listened to the insights of others and evaluated their progress. Online reflective writing activities mapped the progress of their learning and personal growth by charting the students' development as undergraduate researchers and collaborative theatre practitioners. Meaningful reflection papers and discussions helped students analyse interdisciplinary problem-based approaches and experiences in order to discover new ways of thinking about the development of their creative signature projects.

Early on in Stage Two, students selected a topic that had social implications and composed a Purpose Statement about why they elected this specific issue to describe, explain, examine, break down and assess through their contemporary Living Newspaper play. At this point, the door to intentional learning opened.

As you might imagine the topics undergraduates were interested in pursuing often had something to do with their majors or their personal lives, such as the environment, social justice, deportation, rape or gender issues. For example, one of my students elected to write a Living Newspaper piece on the objectification of women. In her Purpose Statement, she offered that the intent behind her Living Newspaper project was to bring 'attention to the subtle cases of objectification that women deal with every day, [and] to put audience members in a woman's shoes so they can understand how it *feels* to be objectified.' In her play, she

wanted the audience to 'leave knowing how ingrained and ever-present objectification of women is in society and understanding how this makes women feel/the damage this does, which should provoke them to do something about it.'

Social issues are complex; they also can be intimidating and emotionally charged, but they provide powerful opportunities for students to assess their personal thoughts about, for example, race and ethnicity. In one instance, a student discovered her own 'unconscious racial tendencies' during a discussion about an early iteration of her Living Newspaper play. Subsequent conversations with me, as well as her online reflections, revealed this student's discomfort about not only her unexamined thoughts but also her need to learn more about people from different backgrounds by listening more carefully to their experiences. She used her metacognitive experience as a self-regulating opportunity. She reshaped the purpose of her Living Newspaper project from how an unhealthy inner-city environment affects its children to one that helped her audience learn how to be self-reflective about race relations, especially as these issues relate to 'environmental justice, gentrification/displacement, [and] childhood development.'

Once students composed their purpose statements, they turned their attention towards examining the play's world – a process that involved crossing cultural boundaries, researching the play's societal issues, talking with their mentors and conducting field interviews. Writing a Living Newspaper play includes researching and presenting authentic information and compelling images about the project's 'big questions.' In order to enhance the students' research experiences, I connected my students to faculty members across the university whose research interests in the humanities, social sciences and/or sciences matched my students' topics. Students refined their questions, built their bibliographies and developed research networks through engagement with faculty members outside of the class.

Beyond the 'traditional' research methods of reading books and articles, these non-theatre majors were introduced through coaching and modelling to, what I call, 'strategies for creative research.' In several intensive workshops on theatre practice, they were encouraged to sketch rudimentary storyboards that illustrated how each scene in their Living Newspaper project said something specific about the play's social message; to produce portrait galleries, a collection of images that explored their characters' inner psychological qualities; to design soundscapes that uncovered something revelatory about the play's emotional subtext; to create improvisational scenes that revealed how characters' physical actions were sparked by psychological motivations. These explorations involved novice artists actively engaged within 'the context of a community of thinkers...where more than one person is working on the solution of a particular problem or within the particular genre of expression' (Rogoff 1990, 198). Their visual, audible and physical explorations were presented and discussed in class. Strategic imaginative thinking helped students identify and think about complex human relationships. For example, when a music student presented her soundscape with an accompanying selection of abstract images that explored the emotional context of rape, the class immediately was engrossed by the music and the images to the extent that we all invested in a personal journey about the psychological ravages of rape. Because the class experienced such strong empathic responses to an individual caught in the world of sexual assault, students became more interested in the social implications of the subject. Subsequent online discussions referred back to the power of this soundscape and, in some instances, students advocated for this exploration to remain in the final draft of the Living Newspaper Treatment. The soundscape exercise became a significant indication that imaginative exploration generates reflective thought about complex subjects.

At this point of the course, the learning environment moved from the classroom and the library to field study. Inspired by what they were learning through both traditional and

non-traditional research activities, students began to pursue another way to think about their play's social issues. This part of their learning journey involved the process of formulating questions for individuals on their interview list. Going into the field and talking to strangers was an intimidating learning activity for some of my students. Jonathan Kaufman, Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist at Northeastern University, provided an additional scaffolding experience. He joined our learning community and addressed their concerns and questions through a learning strategy that resembles apprenticeship. Following Vygotsky's model in which 'social interaction facilitates cognitive development,' this example of a joint problem-solving activity extended the 'existing knowledge and skills' of my students (Rogoff 1990, 141). For example, Kaufman talked about the responsibility of being an 'unbiased journalist' who looks for the 'truth' by asking questions that elicit detail, capture controversial points of view and articulate the intricacies of the issue. Students considered Kaufman's opinions about interviewing, especially in the dramaturgical context of what they already knew about the 1930s Living Newspaper play as well as the theatre of Anna Deavere Smith and Rimini Protokoll. The results of the discussion with a journalism professor made a strategic difference in how my students thought about their signature projects. One student posted that Professor Kaufman made it clear that although interviews include the words of other people, 'it is ultimately the person writing the story (i.e., putting the pieces together) whose voice and perspective is truly being represented.' Another student offered that this encounter with a renowned journalist affected her prior patterned responses to what she thought she knew about journalism. She posted her reflections: 'The best thing about this meeting for me was seeing journalism through fresh eyes.' [I was able] 'to look at journalism as human interaction and storytelling as opposed to what it has become in my eyes: a horrifying burden of dark stories, betraying people, awkward social interactions, and an abusive relationship with the truth.' Ultimately, those students who engaged in original field interviews found the experience to be filled with rich informational material, which provided them with reflective opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the social and psychological implications inherent in the creation of a Treatment for their authentic Living Newspaper plays.

Traditional inquiry-based methods of research, field interviews and creative explorations provided possibilities for reflective thinking and collaborative learning. Students were coached to select what kind of presentational model best fit the intent of their Living Newspaper project from the three examples offered in Stage One of the class. The possibilities included a contemporary version of a traditional 1930s Living Newspaper play, a form of journalistic theatre inspired by Anna Deavere Smith's 'verbatim theatre' or one of the two Rimini Protokoll examples: a 'Remote X' site-specific walking tour or a living installation as staged in *Situation Rooms*. Several students were inspired by the work of Rimini Protokoll's *Situation Rooms* and devised projects that had audience members move through rooms representing different social situations that captured the essence of the play's topic. One student whose project focused on the objectification of women posted:

I chose this style because it allows for the push and pull between an audience member being completely immersed in emotion and being able to step back and reflect upon/consider what they just saw. This is crucial in any theatre trying to provoke social change.

Another student chose a combination of Rimini Protokoll's 'Remote X' site-specific theatre and Bertolt Brecht's *Lehrstück* (learning play) ideas to encourage people to appreciate and think about their current and future relationship with nature. She posted: 'I realized early

on in the process of writing this Contemporary Living Newspaper that if I wanted to write a piece about nature then it would be best to get people outside and engaging with nature.’ She added that her project ‘resembles, a Brechtian Lehrstück’ because she would focus on cognitive engagement rather than ‘passively sitting and receiving information.’

Throughout Stage Two, students posted relevant material about the substance and organisation of their Living Newspaper play on an ePortfolio website designed especially for the class by my teaching assistant. Installments included purpose statement, mentor insights, reflections about their conversation with the Journalism professor, questions for their interviewees and audience members, creative explorations (soundscapes), multiple drafts of each project with frequent peer and instructor comments and, eventually, the final Treatment for their Living Newspaper play. The ePortfolio became a metacognitive strategy that was aimed at making cognitive progress through purposeful collaborative monitoring, assessing personal knowledge and producing further metacognitive experiences; as such, this collaborative space facilitated meaningful dialogues and fostered metacognition (See Takayama 2014, 24–6).

Students used the site to post questions to the community of learners, especially about the effectiveness of their current draft. The community responded, offered advice and encouraged risk taking. The collaborative exchange of ideas was successful because, as ‘targeted feedback,’ it addressed both the content relative to the progress students were making towards achieving their goal of creating a signature work and it directed the students’ subsequent practice of incorporating that feedback into further practice (See Ambrose et al. 2010, 141). Feedback gave rise to successive questions, helped students think about changes and additions and mapped the progress of their reflections through each of their iterations. Online discussions became the topics for in-class discussions; both types of exchanges were effective incentives for reflection and multiple drafts.

Students discovered they were not just completing an assignment; instead, they were engaging in the process of learning in resourceful ways. One student commented:

This is a really unique and wonderful opportunity to learn how to present and understand information in many different ways. It may seem intimidating to come up with an idea for your own piece of documentary theatre, but the class is very collaborative and makes a huge project seem not so intimidating at all. I would encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zone, because this class will change the way you think about theatre and telling stories.

Comments such as this demonstrate the value of HIPs strategies that lead to reflective practice and mindful learning.

Stage Three

The workshop presentation

Students presented a final Treatment Paper of their Living Newspaper projects to the community of learners who critically evaluated the effectiveness of the works in conveying social messages. The final projects consisted of an individual student’s 30-minute PowerPoint presentation followed by a 15-minute group discussion.

Their Treatments included information addressing the following sections: Purpose of the Project, Research Questions, Intended Audience, Production Form, Key Characters, Scene or Episode Breakdown, Breakout Scene, Reflection Statement and the Bibliography.

The Breakout Scene (which could be roughly staged) offered the presenter the opportunity to provide the learning community with an in-depth look at one scene, showing how the play's social ideas were created through some of the following examples: photographs that referenced the actual sites of the walking tour, visual diagrams of the site-specific rooms, performed dialogue, videos, slides and sounds. The final Treatment Paper as well as PowerPoint presentations, videos, written dialogue and soundscapes that were mentioned in the students' final oral presentation was posted online. Final presentations were held in a classroom except for one presentation that occurred in the actual location specified in the student's Breakout Scene.

Concluding thoughts

The Living Newspaper project combined HIPs—undergraduate research, inquiry-based, goal-directed exploratory activities, writing-intensive assignments and cross-disciplinary learning environments—with three specific metacognitive strategies—frequent opportunities for reflection, collaborative problem-solving activities within an active environment of learners and guided mentorship. The process of developing a Treatment for a contemporary Living Newspaper involved cognitive and metacognitive strategies as well as the ability to identify diverse (sometimes difficult) social perspectives, to question, to be flexible and to recognise the value of learning how to learn.

Through this process my students gained a new respect for complex social issues by employing some of the professional tools and metacognitive strategies of the journalist and the theatre artist. Furthermore, because my students became intentional, informed and socially responsible learners, they created unmistakably lucid and creatively nuanced Treatments for their Living Newspaper plays. Throughout the course, they were provided with numerous opportunities to take risks, move beyond their comfort zones and reflect on their progress. Therefore, it seems plausible to suggest that by engaging students in HIPs and metacognitive strategies they will continue to incorporate some or many of these methods of learning as a way of thinking and working when approaching life's unscripted problems.

Note

- 1 For a full description of *Situation Rooms*, see Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi, Daniel Wetzel, *Situation Rooms: A Multiplayer Video Piece*, www.riminiprotokoll.de/website/media/situationrooms/programmhefte/Situation_Rooms_englisch.pdf.

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