

https://dspace.org/

Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in Drama Therapy

Rosendorff, Alexandra

2025-06

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/48525

Rosendorff, Alexandra. (2025). Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in Drama Therapy. [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/48525

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Wits School of Arts

Drama for Life

MaDT Research Essay

WSOA 7082A

Alexandra Rosendorff (Storger)

Student Number: 1964644

RESEARCH TOPIC

Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in Drama Therapy

Supervisor: Monique Hill

dramaforlife

THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS

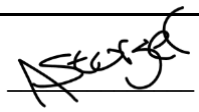
Research essay submitted to University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of requirements of M.A. in the field of Drama Therapy

Declaration of Original Work

I, Alexandra Rosendorff**, Student number:** 1964644 **know and accept that plagiarism (i.e., to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own) is dishonest.**

Ethics clearance number: WSOA20241016-7

	I declare that the assignment titled: Emotional Algorithms: Utilizing AI for Transformative Drama Therapy **and handed in on the date below is my own work.**
	I have acknowledged all direct quotations and paraphrased ideas.
	I have provided a complete, alphabetised reference list, as required by the APA method of referencing (described in the Referencing Handbook).
	I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
	I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand will take disciplinary action against me if evidence suggests that this is not my own unaided work or that I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing
	Did you use AI? Yes X **No** **If yes, please fill in the following statement:** **During the preparation of this work, I used (name of AI tool/platform):** Grammarly and ChatGPT **in order to (provide reason/s) Grammarly:** Grammar checking and spelling corrections, ChatGPT: as a research subject, its use is made clear in the research. **After using this/these tool/s or platform/s, I reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of my work.**

Signed: 

Date: 23/06/2025

Course code: WSOA 7082A

Supervisor: Monique Hill

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following individuals who have been essential in my journey of completing my masters in Drama Therapy.

First, to my wonderful, special, and supportive husband, Nachi, whose unwavering support has been invaluable. Your encouragement and belief in me have kept me going through every challenge that this degree has thrown at me, and I couldn't have done this without you. I love you beyond words and just want you to know what the support over the past two years to pursue this academic journey has meant to me.

To my father, Abba, whose constant support and belief in my potential have been a guiding light. Your constant encouragement and pride has meant the world to me, and I am forever grateful for your love and guidance. Pg I should only continue to bring you nachas.

To my close family, my special siblings, friends, in-laws, and amazing university friends that I have made along my academic journey, thank you for your endless support, love, and understanding. Your presence and belief have made all the difference during this journey.

Most importantly, to Hashem, who has blessed me with the strength, passion, and perseverance to pursue this path. I am truly grateful for all the blessings I have in my life.

A special thank you to my supervisor, Monique, for her incredible guidance and support throughout this process. Your belief in my capabilities, the calming Zoom sessions, your insightful feedback, and your constant push to help me reach my potential have been invaluable. You have made a profound impact on my academic journey, and I am so grateful for everything you have done.

Thank you all for being part of this journey. Your love, support, and belief in me have made this achievement possible.

Abstract

This research explores the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT, with Drama Therapy to enhance creativity, storytelling, and role-playing in therapeutic settings. Given the increasing role of digital technologies in mental health interventions, AI has the potential to offer a unique opportunity to assist Drama Therapists in facilitating personalized, creative scripts that resonate with clients' emotions and experiences. This study seeks to investigate how ChatGPT can be used as a collaborative tool in Drama Therapy, aiding clients in crafting personal stories, engaging in role-play, and exploring alternative therapeutic scenarios. The research adopts a Practice as Research (PAR) methodology, emphasizing experiential learning and the collection of data through workshops with qualified Arts Therapists. These workshops have explored their attitudes toward AI, the potential benefits and risks, and its impact on creativity within the whole therapeutic process. Through employing thematic analysis to examine workshop reflections, video, and audio recordings, the study aims to provide insights into the practical application of AI in a Drama Therapy session. The findings contribute to understanding the role of AI in transforming therapeutic practices, offering a potential bridge between technological advancements and the embodied, creative aspects of therapy. This research also seeks to create a new framework for integrating AI tools in Drama Therapy, promoting a more accessible and inclusive approach to therapeutic interventions.

The findings of this research highlight three key themes in the use of AI, particularly ChatGPT, in Drama Therapy. It explores AI's role as a creative co-author, enhancing story development, improvisation, and role-play through interactive engagement. Addressing ethical and practical concerns, including confidentiality, data security, bias in AI-generated content, and the risk of over-reliance on AI in therapy. It also examines how AI supports emotional processing by helping clients externalize emotions, engage in storytelling, and navigate challenges with verbal expression. These themes illustrate both the potential benefits and limitations of integrating AI into therapeutic practices.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Original Work ***2***

CHAPTER OUTLINES ***6***

Chapter 1: Introduction ***8***

BACKGROUND TO STUDY **8**

PROBLEM STATEMENT **9**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS **10**

RESEARCH AIMS **11**

OBJECTIVES **11**

RATIONALE **12**

LITERATURE REVIEW **14**

AI in the Therapy Space 14

Drama Therapy Core Principles 16

AI and creativity 18

Ethical considerations **19**

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK **20**

Chapter 2: Methodology ***21***

INTRODUCTION ***21***

DATA COLLECTION **21**

Session One: Chatting up ChatGPT: Breaking the ice with AI 22

Session two: From prompt to performance: experiencing the AI-generated Role-play 27

ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHODOLOGY **30**

DISADVANTAGES OF THIS METHODOLOGY **31**

METHOD OF ANALYSIS 31

INTRODUCTION **35**

THEME 1: Scripted Possibilities: AI as a Creative Co-Author in Drama Therapy **36**

Key insights from the data: 36

Can AI Enhance Character and Story Development? 38

Please and Thank you ChatGPT - the Importance of Prompting and Iteration 40

AI's Role in Improvisation and Role-Play 43

THEME 2: Trusting the Chatbot: Ethical Concerns and Practical Limits of AI in Therapy **46**

Key insights from the data: 46

The concern for confidentiality and Data security 47

Bias and Ethical Considerations in AI-Generated Content 48

The Risk of Over-Reliance on AI in Therapy 50

THEME 3: AI as a reflective screen: ChatGPT as a Safe Space for Emotional Processing **53**

Key insights from the data: 53

AI Helps Clients Externalize Emotions Through Storytelling 54

AI-Generated Prompts Encourage Emotional Exploration in New Ways 57

AI Can Reduce Barriers for Clients Who Struggle with Verbal Expression 58

Chapter 4: Conclusion ***59***
References ***62***
Addendum A ***64***
Addendum B ***65***
Addendum C ***67***

CHAPTER OUTLINES

Chapter 1: Introduces the research, focusing on the potential integration of AI, specifically ChatGPT, into Drama Therapy to support storytelling, role-playing, and therapeutic interventions. It outlines the study's aim to explore how AI can be used as a collaborative tool in Drama Therapy, enhancing techniques such as dramatic projection, distancing, and witnessing. The chapter also presents the research questions, objectives, a literature review, and rationale, highlighting the need to understand AI's role in therapy and its potential benefits and risks. It discusses the theoretical framework of social constructionism. It sets the foundation for exploring how AI can be utilized as a creative tool for narrative generation and emotional engagement within the therapeutic space.

Chapter 2: Outlines the methodology used for this research, which is based on Practice as Research (PAR). This approach integrates artistic practices with research to generate data from professionals who engage in and experience the theory in practice. The chapter outlines the process of data collection through workshops with qualified Arts Therapists, focusing on Drama Therapy techniques such as dramatic projection, distancing, storytelling, and role play. The use of AI, specifically ChatGPT, was incorporated as a tool to facilitate story generation and character development. The research was conducted through two online Zoom sessions, where participants explored the use of ChatGPT to create narratives and perform role-play exercises. The chapter also discusses the data collection process, participant demographics, and the method of analysis, which follows thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the research questions.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis and provides a detailed analysis of the data collected from the workshops. It explores three key themes identified through this process. **Theme 1: Scripted Possibilities,** which examines the role of AI, particularly ChatGPT, as a creative co-author in Drama Therapy, focusing on how it enhances character and story development, the importance of prompting and iteration, and its involvement in improvisation and role-play. **Theme 2: Trusting the Chatbot** addresses the ethical concerns and practical limits of incorporating AI into therapy, including issues of confidentiality, data security, bias in AI-generated content, and the potential risk of over-reliance on AI. **Theme 3: AI as a Reflective Screen** explores how ChatGPT serves as a safe space for emotional processing, aiding clients in externalizing emotions through storytelling, encouraging emotional exploration, and assisting clients who struggle with verbal expression. This chapter discusses these findings and

unpacks the possibilities to provide insights into the potential and limitations of AI in Drama Therapy.

Chapter 4: The conclusion chapter of this research highlights the potential benefits of integrating AI into Drama Therapy to promote creativity, emotional processing, and self-expression. AI can serve as a powerful tool for clients, especially those who find it difficult to express themselves creatively, by co-creating stories with AI that mirror their experiences. This process allows for emotional distancing, which can help clients gain new perspectives and engage in deeper reflection. AI-generated narratives also provide a structured framework for clients to articulate their emotions, facilitating therapeutic breakthroughs. Additionally, AI plays a crucial role in role-play therapy by offering dynamic, adaptable characters that allow clients to explore different roles and scenarios in a safe, controlled environment. This aids in the development of coping strategies and boosts confidence. AI-assisted monologues offer further emotional distance, enabling clients to reframe past experiences and gain insight into their emotions. The chapter concludes with a forward-looking perspective on the responsible integration of AI into therapy, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the human connection while leveraging AI's potential to enhance the therapeutic process.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in Drama Therapy

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This research focused on my interest in how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used as a tool in conjunction with Drama Therapy techniques such as dramatic projection, storytelling, distancing, and role play (Jones, 1996: 144). This research explores how AI can be used to expand on dramatic projection as a collaborative tool in Drama Therapy. My research and belief behind it are focused on the idea that using an AI chatbot in therapy sessions can help assist clients in creating narratives or scripts to facilitate creative and therapeutic storytelling and role play.

This research focuses on Story generation through AI (specifically using the chatbot and program ChatGPT). ChatGPT has a potential to be used as an ideation partner which can provide new inputs to catalyze creative thinking and fluid collaboration in real-time (Zhu, 2024: 01). ChatGPT is an open access chatbot, an easy to work with tool that has become a social phenomenon as a groundbreaking example of how AI can be used in contemporary life and is being used on an unprecedented scale (Zhu, 2024: 02).

ChatGPT is a language model developed by OpenAI, designed specifically for generating human-like text-based responses in conversational contexts. As an artificial intelligence system, it functions as a chatbot, engaging in interactions with users through natural language processing (NLP) techniques (Padhiyar & Modha, 2024: 85).

Unlike traditional rule-based chatbots, which rely on scripted responses, ChatGPT is a pre-trained model that generates dynamic responses based on the input it receives in real time. It has been trained on extensive datasets of diverse linguistic patterns, which allows it to interpret, analyze, and respond to user queries in a coherent and contextually relevant manner (Padhiyar & Modha, 2024: 86).

Chat GPT has, to this author's knowledge, not yet been used in story creation for Drama Therapy, and therefore, this research explores this aspect of AI. In my opinion, I believe AI can help in personalized story creation, assisting clients in crafting personal stories that reflect their experiences, emotions, and challenges. This tool can be used for generating narratives that resonate with clients' lives. A trained Drama Therapist can then help the client explore and reframe their experiences in the therapeutic context. This exploration with the chatbot, in sessions, can then be used to further explore what alternative outcomes are possible for the client's story and real-life experiences. This can be done through looking at outcomes based on client and therapist input, allowing them to explore various scenarios and their potential impacts. AI has the ability to become an active collaborator rather than a passive tool (Zhu, 2024: 01).

Utilizing chatbots in the therapy space is a "perfect illustration of the paradigm shift [necessary for change] in mental healthcare" by offering personalized feedback and creative output at the therapists' fingertips (Dhiman, 2024: 02). This can help clients consider different perspectives and coping strategies. ChatGPT can also help with role-playing scenarios – it can be used to create scripts for role-playing exercises, providing clients with dynamic and evolving narratives to engage with at a distance that is safe for them emotionally. These scripts can be tailored to address specific therapeutic goals, such as overcoming fears or practicing social skills.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is evident that technology is extensively utilized and has become a relied-upon tool in society. Through our interactions with our devices, we unconsciously contribute to the creation of an online database, effectively unconsciously extending fragments of ourselves. There is therefore a link between what AI teaches and "tells" us and what we teach it (Marshall, 2020: 04). The algorithms created in AI can therefore inform emotional transformation in Therapy through accessing it as a creative tool.

In an online data collection study by Mcadams in a paper titled "*The Use of Digital Mediums in Expressive Arts Therapy "*, it has been reported that the usage rates for cellphones and other digital devices amongst children and adolescents are at an all-time high, with 95% of teens, aged 13-17,

reporting to own a smartphone. However, despite these staggering statistics, the field of psychology and creative therapies have been slower to adopt and incorporate the use of digital media and technology into the therapeutic setting with clients (Mcadams, 2021: 04).

The use of AI for therapy allows for "artistic expression, self-improvement, and motivation for psychotherapy and neurorehabilitation" (Hadjipanayi, 2023: 01). However there is a concern that people may no longer seek the help from trained and registered therapists and will resort to only using online technology for mental health concerns. It is therefore necessary, in my opinion, to allow for this paradigm shift and explore the relationship and possible benefits that AI in the therapy space can have. It is important to keep up with technology as training therapists and to explore how to integrate the emergence of AI safely and ethically, and the potential to use it as a therapy tool, as opposed to ignoring its imminent popularity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question:

How can the emergence of AI chatbots be accessed as a therapy tool in Drama Therapy?

Research Sub-questions:

- What benefits and risks are involved in incorporating AI into Drama Therapy?
- What are the client/ therapist's attitudes towards AI in therapy? How do clients perceive the inclusion of AI in their Drama Therapy sessions, and what impact does it have on their engagement and trust in the therapeutic process?
- Is AI being used in Therapy, and at what capacity can it be used in Drama Therapy?
- How can AI assist with storytelling and role play in dramatic projection and distancing of Drama Therapy? How can the Drama Therapist then use AI as a collaborative tool to help develop accessible, personalized therapeutic interventions?

RESEARCH AIMS

The research aims to explore the creative tools available through AI, utilizing the specific applications of ChatGPT, within the realm of Drama Therapy. This research does not propose AI as a replacement for the therapist. Rather, it examines how ChatGPT can function as an assistive prompting tool to support storytelling, character development, and imaginative exploration. This study makes use of analyzing current literature available about the use of AI in the therapy space, and practical workshops with qualified Arts Therapists were then held, and the use of ChatGPT as a creative aid was implemented.

Through these workshops, I investigated their openness to AI in the therapy space for creative expression while examining scriptwriting and role-playing techniques. Descriptive and emotive prompts guided the participants in engaging with the AI- AI-generated content, allowing for a reflective and creative expression. This research makes use of the principles of Practice as Research by looking at Robin Nelson and using the experiential space for culminating new knowledge through the lens of Drama Therapy.

Practice as research involves creating practice-based evidence of research outcomes. These creations not only demonstrate the development of new insights but also reflect the contextual and reflexive nature of the practice. By situating the practice within its specific cultural and theoretical context, I, as the researcher, can generate data that is both relevant and deeply informed by the practice itself (Nelson, 1990: 111).

OBJECTIVES

- Discover what AI tools are available for therapy and their potential risks.
- Collect data from participants on their understanding of the use of AI in the therapy space.
- Explore the use of a chatbot AI in the therapy space through the theoretical framework of dramatic projection, distancing, and role play by Phil Jones.

- Utilize ChatGPT to support participants in creating scripts and character descriptions, with an emphasis on enhancing, rather than replacing, the therapist's role in facilitating creative processes.
- Make use of critical reflection and questioning to evaluate the benefits and limitations of using AI as a supplementary tool in therapeutic practices.

RATIONALE

Digital-based media has become a central part of Western society that ultimately shapes culture, therefore this research is beneficial in ascertaining whether these digital influences can contribute to creative expression in the Drama Therapy space (Mcadams, 2021: 05). In my opinion, utilizing the tools of ChatGPT can provide a sense of empowerment when other forms of drama or artistic expression may feel too removed from the client's experience. The chatbot ChatGPT allows for instant conversation with AI, which is necessary to explore, as there is a gap in the exploration of this specific app as a tool in the therapeutic space.

Young people are engaging more with technology and there is an increase in participation with AI which "has ushered a new era of creativity and collaboration, significantly transforming the field of art" (Zhu, 2024: 02). The accessibility to this creative platform is prominent and already being used by people in their day to day lives, therefore by bringing it into the therapy space, clients can feel more confident and at ease with the creative process necessary in Drama Therapy.

This research focuses on ChatGPT as it is a tool that most people are familiar with when it comes to an AI experience, working with it on both professional and leisure occasions (Zhu, 2024: 02). ChatGPT reflects the human faculty of language and symbolism which are both crucial foundations of complex cognitive creativity (Zhu, 2024: 02).

The fusion of AI and creativity can unlock new avenues for creative collaboration as "ChatGPT's conversational abilities enable novel collaborations between humans and AI agents" (Zhu, 2024: 01). Given the rapid technological advancements, the steady decrease in prices of technological apparatus, and the continuous permeation of information technology in various disciplines, it is predicted that during the current millennium, digital art will be transcending its aesthetic role by

adapting in multiple applications as a transdisciplinary medium" (Hadjipanayi, 2023: 01). Therefore, I believe Drama Therapists should start using the available AI technological applications in their practice. ChatGPT in therapy has potential benefits of inclusivity and can be utilized in relation to Drama Therapy and the dramatic reality. My interest lies in investigating the possible relationship between these two spaces, bringing the online AI creative exploration of interactive conversation into the Drama Therapy space. ChatGPT offers an unprecedented resource for inspiration and idea generation (Zhu, 2024: 03).

I believe this research is valuable as it has the potential to influence and inform how Drama Therapists, as well as clients in therapy, perceive and engage with AI in the therapeutic space. My interest in exploring AI and using ChatGPT stemmed from both a professional and personal curiosity, as I sought to understand and examine its role in the therapeutic settings for my development as a training Drama Therapist.

I strived to approach this research without a preconceived bias toward the use of ChatGPT in the therapy space, as I had recognized that my uncertainty regarding whether I, in the position of a client, would have felt comfortable utilizing AI in a personal therapeutic context. This uncertainty further fuelled my interest in the study, as I aimed to explore both the theoretical and practical applications of AI in therapy, specifically in the realm of Drama Therapy. Through this research, I hoped to expand my understanding of AI's potential role in therapeutic practice and critically examine its benefits and limitations.

Through this research, it was necessary to create a new framework for integrating AI technology and digital applications into the therapeutic space. As McAdams states, "The therapist's role is not to eschew this peculiar way of working in favor of more 'traditional' artistic interventions, but rather to engage with it and help the client make sense of themselves within their image-saturated world" (2021). This research study provided a holistic perspective on the potential impact of ChatGPT, highlighting and examining both the benefits and challenges of incorporating this AI tool into the creative process within Drama Therapy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

AI in the Therapy Space

As may be expected in such a new and unconventional sphere of therapeutic engagement, the existing literature is limited. However, I have compiled a review of the themes of the use of AI in the therapy space and the complexities that come with this technological advancement.

Vinod Kumar Dhiman, the Vice President of Information Technology at Chhotu Ram University in India, writes about the Emergence of AI in the mental health sector in the World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews (2024). He states that AI is reshaping our understanding of psychoeducation by developing and applying software for interventions associated with psychotherapeutic activities. Dhiman argues that AI chatbots and therapy bots, programmed to interact one-on-one with users, offer tips, strategies, psychoeducation, and encouragement, providing not only confidentiality but also an extremely accessible way of receiving psychological support (Dhiman, 2024). There are currently over 10,000 options of chatbots available, and these mental health chatbots are described as "dialogue systems designed to interact with a human in real time in a way that mimics human-human conversation" (Grodniewicz & Hohol, 2023). This perspective contributes to the foundation of my research on the significance of the rise of AI chat/therapy bots in the Drama Therapy space. Various chatbots, such as Woebot, were designed to provide cognitive-based therapy interventions based on neuroscientific evidence, driven by the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic (2024).

Grodniewicz and Hohol discuss "*Waiting for a Digital Therapist: Three Challenges on the Path to Psychotherapy Delivered by Artificial Intelligence*," aiming to assess whether AI poses a risk of replacing therapists while remaining open to the potential benefits it could offer for mental health in the future. They argue that chatbots, based on so-called "Large Language Models" (LLMs), can closely resemble conversations with humans, with some even claiming they can prompt users to engage in complex reasoning (Grodniewicz & Hohol, 2023: 02). These chatbots interact with users through a text interface and engage in therapeutic conversations and interventions (Dhiman, 2024: 1869). A concern arises regarding the use of this technology in mental health, as AI chatbots

leverage evidence-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to "make you feel heard," potentially leading individuals struggling with their mental health to rely solely on chatbots for problem-solving, which may be risky, as it raises questions about whether this is equivalent to receiving psychotherapy (Grodniewicz & Hohol, 2023: 04). Dhiman contends that these chatbots contribute to democratizing therapy, allowing patients to benefit from evidence-based interventions and take the lead in self-care (Dhiman, 2024: 1869). However, I believe that the therapist-client relationship remains essential for transformative healing in the therapy space. Dhiman acknowledges potential ethical issues arising from AI-assisted interventions, noting the possibility of neglecting the critical judgment required of a therapist (Dhiman, 2024: 1871). Thus, I believe that the ideal approach lies in integrating both the chatbot and therapist within a safe space, combining the benefits of both.

There is, however, a growing demand for broadly accessible mental health care as well as the rapid development of new technologies, which brings the conversation about the feasibility of psychotherapeutic interventions based on Artificial Intelligence (Grodniewicz & Hohol, 2023: 01). Grodniewicz and Hohol (2023) argue that while currently available Conversational Artificial Intelligence (CAI) can be a useful supplement for human-delivered psychotherapy, it is not yet capable of delivering fully-fledged psychotherapy on its own.

Grodniewicz and Hohol question the possible complications of the lack of humanistic functions that a chatbot is capable of, fearing that it might have a narrow understanding of the client and that AI might only be proficient in dealing with relatively simple tasks (Grodniewicz & Hohol, 2023: 01).

This research introduces the idea of AI into the Drama Therapy space, and so it is important to understand the mechanisms of how Drama Therapy works. I will now turn to the drama therapeutic concepts most relevant to this research.

Drama Therapy Core Principles

There are a number of key processes that lie at the heart of Drama Therapy; these are the main ways in which therapeutic change occurs (Jones, 2007: 09). Drama Therapy pioneer Phil Jones categorizes them as nine core principles of Drama Therapy. These principles include the following: Dramatic projection, Empathy, Distancing, Role play, Witnessing, Embodiment, Play, Life-drama connection, and Transformation.

Dramatic Projection is one of these principles; it involves placing aspects of oneself or their feelings onto an object or character. It is part of how one relates to the world around them (Jones, 1996: 137). The dramatic projection creates a new representation of the client's material (Jones, 1996: 144). The materials and story are used to express and explore problems or emotions and to change the client's relationship to the problem (Jones, 1996: 145). Through dramatic projection, the client engages both intellectually and emotionally, exploring their therapeutic issues through dramatic forms such as characters, play materials, or puppets (Jones, 2007: 10). This process mirrors therapeutic storytelling, where the individuals gain a new perspective on their personal experiences through dramatic projection. This technique connects to using ChatGPT in the therapy space by offering a digital platform for clients to project their thoughts and emotions onto AI-generated characters and stories. By co-creating stories with ChatGPT, clients can externalize their experiences in a structured yet flexible way, allowing for emotional exploration and insight similar to traditional dramatic projection methods.

Distancing in Drama Therapy creates a balance between emotional engagement and cognitive reflection, helping clients process emotions safely. Distancing encourages clients to engage with their issues through thought, reflection, and perspective (Jones, 1996: 95). The clients then engage with the material from a different viewpoint, allowing them to gain perspective on themselves or a particular issue, which can be a key part of the therapeutic process. An example of this in practice is if a client is feeling emotionally overwhelmed, they may use distancing to develop a more detached perspective of their situation or ways of managing their emotions (Jones, 1996: 100). This technique is particularly useful when working with trauma, as it reduces emotional overwhelm while still allowing meaningful engagement.

A similar approach can be seen in the use of ChatGPT in the therapy space, where it provides a structured yet flexible medium for clients to explore their emotions with a sense of psychological distance. Through the AI-generated storytelling and role-play, clients can externalize their experiences less directly, enabling them to reflect on their emotions and challenges from a safer, more detached perspective, much like traditional distancing techniques in Drama Therapy.

In Drama Therapy, a client can express themselves through various forms, one of which is role-playing and personification. The principal of roleplay involves taking on a character, whether it be an imagined figure or someone from real life and this is done through improvisation (Jones, 1996: 94). Landy describes a role as a container for thoughts and feelings that one holds about themselves and others, serving as a fundamental unit of one's personality (Jones, 1996: 203). An individual's self is seen as being composed of multiple roles or units, each role possessing distinct qualities that contribute to their uniqueness and coherence. Roleplay in Drama Therapy allows a client to represent a feeling, issue, person, or themselves within a dramatic framework in a role. They often do so by taking this role and exploring it through depicting something or playing a part of themselves or by using an object to represent the material (Jones, 1996: 94). This technique helps the client to experience what it is like to be someone else or to play themselves in a dramatic representation of their lives, allowing them to foster empathy and improve how they relate to others (Jones, 1996: 95).

Through using ChatGPT to write scripts for clients to use in sessions for role play, the client will (ideally) be able to use the chatbot to represent various emotions. This technique will allow everyone's unconscious to express any emotions that they were feeling and would like to explore; this taps into their inner emotional state, allowing them to reply more freely. The client can create a story and characters with AI and express a dramatic identity, through the AI, that is both about themselves but also safely distanced enough from his own identity to allow them to discuss and reflect personal material that might otherwise have been difficult to bring up (Jones, 1996: 143). The dramatic expression enables changes through the creation of perspective, along with the opportunity for exploration and insight through the enactment of the projected material. Through this expression and exploration, a new relationship to the material can be achieved by the client (Jones, 1996: 144).

AI and creativity

A collaborative paper titled "*Exploring the impact of ChatGPT on art creation and collaboration: Benefits, challenges and ethical implications*" explores the introduction of AI, specifically, ChatGPT, for art creation and the implications for creativity and individuality that the artist might face (Zhu, 2024). The rise of AI has caused many artists to fear that their individual style is being lost through the use of ChatGPT, while other artists embrace AI as expanding their toolbox (Zhu, 2024: 01). This shift in perspective and paradigm shift is what drew me to this research. I believe that ChatGPT can be added as a tool to the Drama Therapist's toolbox.

ChatGPT is an example of the progress that AI has made, "the [new] way of thinking it embodies has changed from mechanism to empiricism, language is the essence of human existence, so the emergence of ChatGPT has hit the heart of human subjectivity" (Zhu, 2024: 03). An important epistemological issue that should be addressed regarding ChatGPT is that it is far from translating all human thinking, significantly advanced thinking into machine thinking, creative thinking is the most prominent and difficult to understand for humans. Creative thinking cannot be reduced to relevant theories of psychology, biology, and neurology (Zhu, 2024: 07). As for the so-called ''creative thinking'' of ChatGPT, the apps thinking is no longer closed but has a specific contextual uncertainty, flexibility, or improvisation when establishing information or language connections (Zhu, 2024: 08). ChatGPT does not have complete transparency of thinking, and the autonomy of the thought is not equivalent to subjectivity as it does not have its own beliefs or ideas (Zhu, 2024: 08).

Creativity is difficult to define as it is not a scientific concept but rather a "culturally and historically specific idea that changes from one country to another and from one century to another" (Dickinson and Bailey, 2024: 45). In a chapter in the book "*The drama therapy decision tree: Connecting drama therapy interventions to treatment*" by Dickinson and Bailey, the idea of creativity in Drama Therapy is explored. In Drama Therapy, creativity and spontaneity are essential components, as the actual practice is rooted in improvisational drama. These qualities are vital to fostering an environment where participants can explore and express their emotions and experiences freely (Dickinson and Bailey, 2024: 46). Research has demonstrated that creativity contributes to significant positive outcomes, such as improved problem-solving, critical thinking,

and divergent thinking, while also leading to reductions in stress, anxiety, and mood disturbances (Dickinson and Bailey, 2024: 46).

Creativity often emerges as a group process, characterized by collaboration, improvisation, unpredictability, and reliance on shared cultural knowledge. Drama Therapy offers participants opportunities to develop these creative skills through activities like brainstorming, accepting others' ideas, building scenes together, and compromising when needed (Dickinson and Bailey, 2024: 47). Improvisation also plays a key role in both the preparation and execution stages of creative work, helping participants develop skills that extend beyond the therapy setting into real-life situations, where improvisation is a regular part of communication and problem-solving (Dickinson and Bailey, 2024: 48).

The above-mentioned technique of fostering creativity and improvisation in Drama Therapy has its parallels in using ChatGPT in the therapy space. This is seen where the dynamic interaction and spontaneous responses encourage creativity in problem-solving and communication. By integrating ChatGPT, therapists can therefore create an environment where clients practice flexibility and improvisation in a safe, guided space, similar to how they would in Drama Therapy.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully considered when selecting participants to ensure the study maintained professional and research integrity. Only qualified therapists were included in the workshops, as they possessed the necessary expertise to assess the potential risks and benefits of integrating AI into therapeutic practice. This approach safeguarded client welfare by first exploring the new technique with professionals before considering its application with clients. Additionally, trained therapists were well-equipped to provide informed consent, as they could critically evaluate the implications of AI-assisted Drama Therapy within the context of their work. Their insights were grounded in practical experience rather than personal opinions, allowing for a more objective and practice-based analysis of AI's role in therapy. This ensured that any conclusions drawn from the research were informed by real-world application rather than theoretical or subjective perspectives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that this research focuses on is social constructionism, which can be defined as a perspective which believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences (Owen, 2005: 01). Artificial technological knowledge is achieved through the accumulation of online users' information being collected, then processed and used with the aim of AI creating a likeness to a human response for a better online experience. Therefore, I am interested in whether the emergence of AI can be accessed as a collaborative Drama Therapy tool. AI can be seen as a result of social constructionism, regarding individuals as integral to culture, politics, and historical evolution (Owen, 2005: 01).

Therapy allows an opportunity for clients “to have a new set of experiences through which they may or may not reorient themselves in the world” (Owen, 2005: 08). In my opinion, this is where story creation through AI can be achieved.

Social constructionism sees therapy as having multiple functions, some of which are for the therapist to facilitate, while providing as little external material as possible to clients but guiding them in finding personal truth, problem solving and finding reasons/causes, but ultimately in understanding others (Owen, 2005: 08). The therapist has an ethical obligation to help the client, however ultimately sessions are the co-creation of clients with therapists (Owen, 2005: 10). In the same way this research seeks to connect co- creation of stories with the client and therapist through ChatGPT.

Chapter 2: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The methodology for this research is Practice as Research (PAR). I have chosen this form of research as it is a method of exploration and practice as an illustrative outcome of research inquiry (Nelson, 1990). This methodology aligns directly with my research topic, as it integrates various artistic practices with research, in order to generate data from professionals who engage with and who experience the theory in practice.

This research has been achieved through examining the Drama Therapy techniques of dramatic projection, storytelling, and role play, which served as my primary method of data collection in my workshops. Additionally, I explored a novel approach to conducting this technique by incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI). My goal for the research was to culminate this study with a transformative understanding of the efficacy of AI in the therapy space.

In the realm of Practice as Research, the collection of data is linked to the creative and performative processes themselves. This methodology influences the embodied knowledge inherent in artistic practices to generate valuable insights. PAR, as my method emphasizes the way in which I, as a Drama Therapist, can obtain tacit knowledge, captured through the practice of Drama Therapy with qualified therapists. Through engaging directly with the practice, as the researcher, I was able to uncover insights that are otherwise hidden in conventional research methods (Nelson, 1990: 112).

DATA COLLECTION

To begin the research, I sent out an open call on a SANATA (South African National Art Therapies Association) WhatsApp group exclusively for HPCSA (Health Professions Council of South Africa) registered Arts Therapists. I chose to engage with this group of professionals in order to explore the opinions and perspectives of these practicing arts therapists on AI. Initially, I planned to conduct workshops exclusively for Drama Therapists. However, due to the limited number of

Drama Therapists practicing in Gauteng, I expanded my outreach to gain a broader perspective. As a result, four individuals from the WhatsApp group expressed interest in participating in the workshops.

The four participants who had volunteered to participate in the research were all female, aged primarily between 26-35 years, they were practicing professionals in Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, and Art Therapy, with qualifications ranging from bachelor's degrees to postgraduate certifications. Many had been practicing therapy for varying amounts of time, from less than a year to over six years. The research also examined participants' familiarity with AI, focusing particularly on ChatGPT, with responses indicating that they had experience with prior use of it for creative writing, email correspondence, client communication, and research. While some of the participants had previously engaged with ChatGPT for emotional support. The initial concerns that were raised were regarding confidentiality, ethical considerations, and the potential over-reliance on AI in therapeutic settings. Despite these initial concerns, there was an openness and excitement to integrating AI into Drama Therapeutic practices.

The workshop sessions were initially planned to take place in person; however, two of the four participants were located outside of Gauteng—one in KwaZulu-Natal and another in Europe. To accommodate these participants, I adapted the workshops to be conducted virtually over two Zoom sessions, scheduled one week apart. I utilized the tools that Zoom had available for data collection, including screen recording, and shared my screen to provide participants with a visual of my interactions with ChatGPT in real time for them to experience it. Before the first session, I requested that all participants either download the ChatGPT app or have the webpage open to facilitate engagement during the session and for follow-up activities after the workshop.

Session One: Chatting up ChatGPT: Breaking the ice with AI

The first Zoom session was 90 minutes long and had the following layout:

The purpose of this session was to introduce my research topic and to establish rapport with the participants while facilitating a group discussion on the role of AI in the therapy space. This session

also served as an introduction to the participants for using ChatGPT as a tool for character and story generation, laying the foundation for the second session, which would focus on role-play and script creation through ChatGPT in an embodied way.

I began the Zoom session by introducing myself and explaining my interest in this research. I then invited my participants to introduce themselves and share what motivated them to join this research session. To foster engagement, I then encouraged them to reflect on what aspects of this research resonated with them and to articulate their expectations for the workshop.

I emphasized the importance of active engagement and discussion throughout the workshop to ensure the collection of rich and qualitative data. To provide clarity, I explained the outline and the structure of the sessions: to begin, I would introduce the Drama Therapy technique being explored, followed by a screen-sharing demonstration of my interaction with ChatGPT as an example. Participants then had an opportunity to ask questions before engaging in their exploration and experience of the process. Finally, we would conclude each exercise with a sharing segment for participants to present their work, followed by a feedback discussion, reflection, and additional questions.

Before beginning the activities and practical exploration with ChatGPT in this session, we engaged in a brief discussion centred around the research questions. I introduced the following points as prompts and facilitated a guided conversation on participants' thoughts and feelings regarding AI and its role in therapy:

a) What comes to mind when you hear "ChatGPT"?
b) What motivated you to participate in this research?
c) What do you know about the use of chatbots in therapy?
d) What are your thoughts, concerns, or questions about this? Before we begin, what are your initial impressions of using ChatGPT in Drama Therapy?

This discussion provided valuable insight into participants' perspectives before they actively engaged with the AI tool.

To create a bridge into the session, I incorporated a warm-up activity that I frequently use with new clients and groups—as a "get to know each other" dice game. The original structure of the game involves rolling a physical die, with each number (1–6) corresponding to a pre-prepared question on a paper that we refer to throughout the game. Participants then take turns rolling the die and answering the question associated with their number.

For this online adaptation, I shared my screen to display the questions and used a digital dice roller from a Google website. To further integrate ChatGPT into the session, I opened a new chat on my laptop and entered the following prompt: *"Please generate six 'get to know you' questions, numbered 1–6."* This allowed ChatGPT to contribute directly to the activity, setting the stage for the participants to begin interacting with AI in a practical and engaging way.

Once ChatGPT generated the questions, I read through them with the group to ensure that everyone was comfortable with them. I also invited participants to make suggestions for any adaptations they might like, in order to make the questions more relevant to our specific group. The intention behind involving participants in shaping the questions early in the session was to foster a sense of agency with AI from the outset.

By collaboratively refining the questions while incorporating ChatGPT in the process, I aimed to create a balance for future clients/ participants, through reducing the pressure on participants to generate content entirely on their own while still allowing them to take ownership of the activity. This approach encouraged engagement while positioning AI as a supportive tool rather than a directive force for creativity.

One of the goals of this warm-up activity was to familiarize participants with how to engage with and prompt ChatGPT in order to demonstrate how the tool works in conjunction with therapy. Additionally, I aimed to gather some feedback on how to effectively structure the prompts. The follow-up questions for this activity centred on exploring whether the participants were aware that ChatGPT could generate such responses and how they felt about having agency in the process of discussing and refining the questions with ChatGPT. This discussion provided valuable insight into their experience of interacting with AI and how involved they felt in shaping the session.

The second interaction with ChatGPT was a character exploration activity, which I had titled "Who Am I". This warm-up aimed to encourage participants to step into the perspectives of various and random characters, fostering creativity, empathy, and improvisation as well as incorporating AI in the process of creative expression. The exercise was designed to help build participants' confidence while also promoting a sense of group connection as they engaged with these different character roles. Through this activity, participants were encouraged to expand their thinking and connect more deeply with the creative process while involving ChatGPT.

The exercise had the following layout:

1. Set the Scene and introduction to character creation:

I began by explaining to the participants that they would each create a unique character and introduce themselves as the character in the first person. I encouraged them to embody their character physically and vocally, in whatever way they felt most comfortable. This allowed for a creative approach and set the tone for this immersive experience.

Next, I explained that they would be using ChatGPT to generate their characters' stories. Each participant would individually input prompts to create their character, facilitating a personalized interaction with the tool. I then shared my screen and provided the following prompt to ChatGPT: *"Give me one random character description unrelated to anything above, including some facts about themselves."*

2. Engaging with ChatGPT and Character Introductions:

I encouraged the participants to engage in a 'discussion' with ChatGPT, prompting the tool according to what they wanted to explore most about the character. I offered examples of how they could modify or adapt parts of the character's storyline or traits that they didn't feel satisfied with, thus allowing them to shape the character according to their preferences.

Once the participants had created their characters, I asked each one of them to introduce their character to the group in the first person, speaking from their character's perspective. This activity allowed for a deeper connection to the characters and an opportunity for the group to get to know one another's characters.

3. Plan for a Collaborative Scene:

The original plan was to have the characters meet one another in a shared scene and space, fostering further collaboration and exploration. However, due to time constraints, I decided to forgo this step to allow more time for the next activity, which would focus on the main exploration of character stories, descriptions, and script creation for the purpose of the research.

The primary goal of this exercise was to introduce the participants to the collaborative process of creating a character with ChatGPT. I aimed to convey to them that they had the agency to modify or change any responses generated by ChatGPT about this random character if they didn't feel comfortable or satisfied with the result. By engaging with ChatGPT, I wanted to further explore whether the participants felt that it limited their creativity or sparked new ideas and inspiration through the prompts and conversation.

The main activity for this session, which served as a bridge to the next session, involved the participants engaging in online mask or puppet creation. However, this did require adaptation, as not all participants had the latest version of Zoom, which would have allowed them to create an avatar. To accommodate this, I provided an alternative: for those without access to the avatar feature, I suggested they could gather any available items, materials, or accessories around them to construct their character. While they worked on the visual representation of their character, "mask or puppet", I guided them with prompts to develop their character further. In Drama Therapy, a character role is the creation of a dramatic reality, the enactment of that identity, and the separation from that identity is where the therapeutic process sits, which is what I wanted the participants to experience (Jones, 1996: 222). I then gave them the following prompts to think about the name for their character. I encouraged the participants to consider a few key aspects of their character's background, including where they came from and a few defining details about their past. I invited them to reflect on whether they wanted to create a character who felt relatable to them or, alternatively, someone entirely different—an unfamiliar character whom they were curious to explore further.

The participants were then instructed to use ChatGPT to generate a more in-depth and detailed character description, building upon the initial prompts that they had considered, such as the

character's name, background, and origin. I then encouraged them to extend their conversation with ChatGPT, utilizing similar prompts from the previous exercise to further develop their characters and explore the range of ideas generated by the model. The hope was for the participants to continue this exploration beyond the session, allowing them to refine their characters leading up to the next session. The goal was for each participant to arrive at the second session with a well-defined character, complete with a rich background. Through dramatic projection, the aim was for the participants to become emotionally and intellectually involved in the stories they brought to the session in the dramatic form of their characters and puppets (Jones, 1996: 10).

I concluded the session by inviting my participants to share their feedback and reflections on the activities and overall experience of the session. Guiding the discussion with my research questions in mind, I encouraged them to consider their opinions on the techniques used, as well as their personal experiences engaging with ChatGPT. To close the session, I asked whether their perspective on ChatGPT had shifted in any way as a result of these exercises they had experienced.

Session two: From prompt to performance: experiencing the AI-generated Role-play

The Second and final zoom session was 90 minutes long and had the following layout:

The focus of this final session, as previously mentioned, was to provide the participants with the opportunity to practically and actively engage in and experience the process of story development and script generation for role-play, as facilitated by ChatGPT.

The session began by diving straight into the paragraphs that participants, along with their personal ChatGPT apps, had generated about their avatars or characters from the previous week. I then collected their interactions with ChatGPT for later use in data analysis. This was followed by a discussion on their experiences with ChatGPT, exploring how their conversations unfolded, the prompts that they used, any edits they made, and their overall creative process. I then explored and questioned the participants on the extent to which these characters remained relatable even after their details and descriptions were processed through ChatGPT. This was helpful to focus on distancing from the character whilst allowing the participants to relate to them. The client's creation

of roles enables them to create distance, allowing them to explore a life situation (Jones, 1996: 220).

I then encouraged participants to further explore their connection to their character, prompting them to reflect on who this character is and what aspects, if there were any, they might share in common. Following this, I instructed them to use ChatGPT to generate a short monologue (100–200 words) centered on a struggle their character was facing. Participants were encouraged to actively shape this struggle and input their ideas into ChatGPT to guide the monologue and story development.

To gather data, I then asked participants to share their experiences and interactions with ChatGPT throughout this process. They were then invited to "perform" the generated monologue for the group. This performance served as an opportunity to examine what it felt like to embody and present a piece which was co-created with ChatGPT, integrating both the AI's generated text and their character descriptions. Through this exercise, the participants were able to experience how ChatGPT becomes the transformative Drama Therapy tool as it uses the clients' experiences of expressed problems and further explores these issues in character development/ dialogue (Jones, 1996: 10).

I then created two breakout rooms and strategically placed each of the two Drama Therapists in each room, as they were inherently more prepared for the drama-ready and focused task. I asked the participants to enter their allocated Zoom rooms and collaborate with their partner to create a duologue. I encouraged them to use their creativity in deciding the nature of the scene, the length, and how they wanted to integrate ChatGPT prompts into the development of the dialogue. I did, however, encourage them to rely on ChatGPT for the actual creation of the script.

The goal was to give the participants the agency to shape the scene according to their vision while allowing their interaction with ChatGPT to influence the process. I respected their creative autonomy by providing privacy during the script creation and did not enter or linger in their private Zoom rooms, checking in periodically by entering the breakout rooms to offer support and facilitate the process where necessary.

The layout of this activity went as follows:

1. Performing the Scene:

Once enough time had been allocated for their script creation in the breakout rooms on Zoom, each pair was then given the opportunity to perform their duologue for the rest of the group. After the performance, they were asked to explain and unpack the prompts they used, the methods they employed in creating the scene, and the reasoning behind their choices. This provided insight into their creative process and how they integrated ChatGPT into their work, as the breakout rooms had provided privacy in their creative process, as the researcher however I still wanted to hear and understand their process for later analysis.

2. Group Discussion and Feedback:

Following the performances from each pair and their discussion of the process, we engaged in a group discussion where participants shared their thoughts and opinions on the content and development of the duologues. We reflected on the scripts, the themes explored, and their overall performance. This allowed for constructive feedback and an open exchange of ideas, enhancing the collaborative learning experience of PAR.

3. Adapting the Script:

The group was then also invited to provide suggestions on how the scripts or the process of creating the scripts could be adapted or altered. The pairs were tasked with implementing the suggested changes and then performing the revised duologue on the spot without prior revision or more adaptations (once again due to time constraints). We explored the impact of these alterations, considering how different prompts or adjustments could lead to alternate outcomes or variations in the scene, and discussed the role that the Drama Therapist would play. This exercise encouraged flexibility and creative problem-solving in the moment.

4. Closing Discussion:

The final session concluded with a lead discussion focused on the collaboration and creative process behind the development of these characters' stories, roles, and relevance to the individual participant. We reflected on how the use of ChatGPT supported and

enhanced the creation of the scripts and how the participants navigated the co-creation process without a facilitator in the room (me as the researcher). This final discussion allowed the group to reflect on the experience and its relevance to their practice, reinforcing the value of creative collaboration in therapy.

ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHODOLOGY

This methodology for my research was ideal as it integrates various sources of evidence—testimonies, visual records, and theoretical reflections—into a cohesive research paper. By cross-referencing the diverse data that has been collected, I was able to construct a multi-faceted understanding of the practice (Nelson, 1990: 113).

By integrating these elements, PAR provides a comprehensive and nuanced approach to data collection, offering insights that are both profound and specific to the embodied nature of artistic practices. This research is experiential, and I have used PAR to investigate the different uses and perspectives of AI in the therapy space while analysing the data through a critical reflective framework.

PAR involves meticulous documentation of the creative process by making use of recordings, notebooks, and reflections. In order to expand this research and explore the possibilities of AI in therapy, it is necessary to have evidence of the practice in workshops. Critical reflection on this documentation helps in contextualizing the practice within broader theoretical frameworks, thereby enriching the data collected (Nelson, 1990: 106).

Mark Fleishman discusses the broad idea, agreed upon among theorists, that “practice” refers to embodied, materially based human activities which are grounded in shared practical understanding. These practices form a unique social reality, meaning that society is seen as a network of interconnected, embodied practices (Fleishman, 2017: 127).

Traditionally, there has been a clear divide between academics who study practices and the practitioners who carry them out (Fleishman, 2017: 127). However, this divide is shifting as practitioners increasingly enter the academic spaces. Practice As Research (PAR) is particularly

relevant to this study, as it aligns with my dual role as both a Drama Therapist and researcher. PAR values the lived experience, collaboration, and reflexive practice, making it a fitting framework for exploring and generating knowledge through therapeutic work. Through the process of research through practice, the knowledge arises through the practice by professionals, and it is a "knowing from the inside" (Fleishman, 2017: 128).

DISADVANTAGES OF THIS METHODOLOGY

While conducting this PAR, I, as the researcher, noted several disadvantages to this form of research. The first was about subjectivity- this is because PAR is based on the researcher's personal experience, and it can possibly affect the reliability and generalizability of the results. This can be difficult because of using ChatGPT, which is based more on algorithms and is data-driven, whereas Drama Therapy is based on more of the emotions and opinions of the individual clients.

Therefore, the outcomes of PAR, especially in therapy, may be hard to quantify. When combining this with ChatGPT, it can be more challenging to measure the actual effectiveness of the technology in the therapeutic context. The size and population details of my research group can also affect the data that is collected and how the ideas and theories in the PAR are understood and used. In PAR, there is a lack of peer review – the data might not always undergo the same level of scrutiny as traditional research.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis is the foundational analysis method for this qualitative research, it is a method used for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). I have used this technique to identify themes - a theme being data that is captured in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 82).

I therefore followed Braun and Clarke (2006: 86) six-phase approach as a guideline to understand the thematic analysis process.

PHASE ONE: Entailed familiarizing myself with the data I had collected. This required me to fully immerse myself in my data by not only re-watching but also reading and re-reading my transcripts from sessions in an active way. I familiarized myself with the data to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances in the participants' perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87). I did this by making use of highlighting, making notes and annotations as well as comments on my data during the re-watching and re-reading process. Through this, I was able to begin to recognize and highlight ideas and concepts that were related to my research questions.

After reviewing the transcripts, key discussions emerged around AI's role in improvisation, accessibility, session planning, and its evolving presence in Drama Therapy. Participants shared both enthusiasm and skepticism about integrating AI into creative therapeutic work.

PHASE TWO: The second phase of Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach is then done through the generation of initial codes, allowing me to identify codes with particular features within my dataset. This was accomplished by compiling a list of key observations and noteworthy insights that emerged from the data I had collected. Ultimately, this step involves "organizing your data into meaningful groups" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 88). Additionally, I examined participants' engagement with the material and the implementation of the technique and conversations with ChatGPT during the sessions, while also critically reflecting on my own responses and potential biases. I then consolidated my notes with the Zoom video footage to identify recurring themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 89).

Key codes identified include "AI as an improv partner," "structured spontaneity," "accessibility for clients," "ethical concerns," and "future AI potential." These codes highlight the dual nature of AI, both as a helpful tool and as a challenge to traditional therapy methods.

PHASE THREE: This phase involved refining the analysis by reorganizing the different codes and identifying potential themes within the broader thematic framework of the research. Then further unpacking the themes into candidates for themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 90).

The initial themes formed were “AI as a Co-Creator in Drama Therapy,” “Navigating Ethical & Emotional Challenges,” and “Future Potential of AI in Therapeutic Spaces.” These themes group together various perspectives on AI’s evolving role.

PHASE FOUR: The next phase is achieved through reviewing and refining these themes and sub-themes. In this phase, I carefully reviewed that the data within these themes cohere together in a meaningful way and making sure that there are clear distinctions between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 91). I then made a final decision on the following themes and subthemes:

Theme 1: Scripted Possibilities: AI as a Creative Co-Author in Drama Therapy

Sub-Themes:

1. Can AI Enhance Character and Story Development?
2. “Please and Thank You, ChatGPT” – The Importance of Prompting and Iteration
3. AI’s Role in Improvisation and Role-Play

Theme 2: Trusting the Chatbot: Ethical Concerns and Practical Limits of AI in Therapy

Sub-Themes:

1. The Concern for Confidentiality and Data Security
2. Bias and Ethical Considerations in AI-Generated Content
3. The Risk of Over-Reliance on AI in Therapy

Theme 3: AI as a Reflective Screen: ChatGPT as a Safe Space for Emotional Processing

Sub-Themes:

1. AI Helps Clients Externalize Emotions Through Storytelling
2. AI-Generated Prompts Encourage Emotional Exploration in New Ways
3. AI Can Reduce Barriers for Clients Who Struggle with Verbal Expression

PHASE FIVE: Phase five is where I defined and named the themes from the data. I did this through unpacking and defining what the essence of each theme was about, as well as identifying what aspects of the data each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 92).

Theme 1: Scripted Possibilities: AI as a Creative Co-Author in Drama Therapy- This theme unpacks how AI serves as a collaborative tool in character and story development, helping clients

and therapists generate narratives, refine scenes, and explore new creative directions through structured prompts and iterative storytelling.

Theme 2: Trusting the Chatbot: Ethical Concerns and Practical Limits of AI in Therapy - while AI offers innovative support in therapy, concerns around confidentiality, bias, and over-reliance highlight the need for ethical considerations and safeguards to ensure responsible integration into therapeutic practice.

Theme 3: AI as a Reflective Screen: ChatGPT as a Safe Space for Emotional Processing - AI can act as a neutral, judgment-free space where clients experiment with storytelling, process emotions, and engage in self-reflection in ways that might feel less intimidating than direct human interaction.

PHASE SIX: The final phase of the thematic analysis is the final production of the report, which can be seen in Chapters 3 and 4. Through these chapters, I unpack and convey the story of my data and the validity of my analysis whilst providing sufficient evidence of the themes within the data by referencing instances in the workshops (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 93).

The final analysis presents AI as a tool that can enhance Drama Therapy, but also presents challenges in emotional depth, ethical concerns, and human connection. Findings suggest AI is best used as a supplement rather than a replacement for a human therapist.

CHAPTER 3: Thematic Analysis of Findings

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter presents the themes that emerged from the data analysis through Braun & Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, which I conducted, as mentioned earlier. At this moment, I would like to remind the reader of the research questions that I aimed to answer through this PAR, including the following:

- How can AI chatbots like ChatGPT be used as a tool in Drama Therapy?
- What are the potential benefits and risks?
- How is ChatGPT currently being used in therapy?
- How can ChatGPT work in conjunction with a Drama Therapist?

The thematic analysis from my research revealed three main themes from the workshop sessions with the qualified Arts Therapists. The first theme I have titled " **Scripted Possibilities: AI as a Creative Co-Author in Drama Therapy" -** this theme explores AI as a collaborative tool for storytelling and improvisation in Drama Therapy - this theme highlighted the positive response to how ChatGPT could help enhance narrative development, character creation and enhance role playing scripts, allowing the therapist and client to use ChatGPT for improvisation scenes and exploration. However, there was also a discovery through the participants that there was a strong need for prompts to be carefully crafted and that the therapist should participate and lead to ensure that the AI-generated context is still meaningful and relevant to the client.

The second theme that arose: **Trusting the Chatbot? Ethical Concerns and Practical Limits of AI in Therapy -** this theme highlights some ethical as well as practical challenges that were of concern regarding confidentiality and possible over-reliance of the therapist on AI. It was discovered that although the participants noted the potential benefit of using ChatGPT in therapy, there were concerns around how to use it critically as well as ethically to avoid reinforcing stereotypes based on previous searches and without compromising the client's privacy.

The Third theme that was discovered is **AI as a reflective screen: ChatGPT as a Safe Space for Emotional Processing.** This theme explored AI as a tool for emotional processing and client

engagement. Through the research, it was demonstrated that ChatGPT has the potential to help clients externalize emotions through fictionalized narratives, particularly for those who struggle more with verbal expression. The ChatGPT prompts and responses, with the therapist as the guide, provided a structure for storytelling and paved the way for the therapist to take an indirect approach to exploring the client's emotions in a safe yet creative way.

The themes discussed above, which will be further explored and examined in the following chapter, unpack how AI is most effective when used as a structured and therapist-guided tool, rather than an independent therapeutic tool. Together, these above themes suggest that ChatGPT holds significant potential as a complementary tool in Drama Therapy; however, this is only possible provided that ethical considerations and a therapist's oversight, in order to facilitate the conversation, remain central to its application.

THEME 1: Scripted Possibilities: AI as a Creative Co-Author in Drama Therapy

Key insights from the data:

Through the research conducted, the clients all expressed the positive possibilities that they saw in using AI, particularly in using ChatGPT, in therapy with the therapist leading the session, and how it can function as a storytelling assistant. Through the exploration of randomized character descriptions and then the prompt-led character story creations by the participants, they explored how ChatGPT has the ability to, within moments, create and generate characters, backstories, dialogues, and monologues that can later be used and facilitated by the Drama Therapist for improvisation, distancing, and role-play.

Using ChatGPT in this way is in line with Drama Therapy's idea of storytelling as a technique to help clients externalize emotions, process experiences from a safe distance, and explore different perspectives and outcomes. Storytelling in Drama Therapy allows individuals to project their emotions onto fictional characters, making it easier to explore difficult feelings without feeling overwhelmed (Gersie, 1997: 114). Narrative techniques in storytelling help clients to detach from

their immediate emotional distress by reframing their experiences within a story. This provides a protective distance that enables reflection and insight in the session (Gersie, 1997: 117). Similar to the stories that are produced through prompts and conversations with ChatGPT, symbols in stories can act as metaphors for personal struggles, allowing individuals to engage with their emotions indirectly and at their own pace (Gersie, 1997: 119).

AI allows for clients and therapists to break past creative blocks and explore new scripts and narrative possibilities. However, there is still the responsibility for the therapist to facilitate, as the ChatGPT responses are not always immediately therapeutic in nature. The responses, therefore, require further assistance from the therapist to offer humanistic refinement in the form of prompting to align the work with the client's needs and overall therapeutic goals.

It became clear from the participants that they felt ChatGPT was most effective when it was used in a more structured manner, while the therapist guided its integration in the session.

Therapy is built on trust, warmth, and emotional attunement— all qualities that arise from a shared human experience, not algorithms. During the first research session, one of the most striking discussions revolved around the limitations and fears around AI in therapy. The participants all unequivocally agreed that while AI can be a useful tool, it cannot replace the human aspects of therapy. Particularly, not being able to replace the connection, spontaneity, and intuition that are so crucial and necessary to the therapeutic process.

One of the participants made a very thought-provoking comment: *"We have to be careful… If we don't integrate it, we'll fall behind, but if we overuse it, we might lose something important in therapy" (session 1).* This statement really encapsulated the tension in our discussion and the tension surrounding this research. There was definitely a recognition that AI has the potential to assist Drama and Art Therapists, but also a common concern that the use of it in therapy may lead to an over-reliance on it, resulting in the therapy lacking its most human and healing elements.

What stood out to me was the emphasis on human connection. Participants expressed that AI lacks the ability to genuinely feel and connect with a client. One participant stated that from her experience with AI, she noted that: *"ChatGPT gives me ideas, but I still need to shape them to make them emotionally impactful" (Session 2).* While AI can generate responses based on data, it

cannot replicate the comfort or qualities of a compassionate present therapist with the intuitive shifts that they make in response to a client's emotional cues.

Another key limitation discussed in this session was AI's inability to be truly spontaneous and intuitive. As therapists, we often adjust our approach in real-time based on a client's body language, hesitation, or even silence. AI, on the other hand, relies on pre-programmed responses and does not possess the lived experiences that shape a therapist's gut instincts. This lack of adaptability could make AI feel rigid or impersonal in a therapeutic setting. The fear of AI creating distance between the creative work and the client was mentioned, one participant stated: *"I can't fully connect to something that wasn't created by a human—it feels artificial" (Session 2).* This fear was reiterated by the other participants who felt the same concern about the possibilities of overuse of AI, which could result in the essence of Drama Therapy, which is human connection, being lost.

The following sub-themes further unpack the data analysis:

Can AI Enhance Character and Story Development?

After using and exploring ChatGPT for generalized story creation, the participants used ChatGPT to generate character backstories and monologues, which they then had the opportunity to perform. All the participants then further expressed an interest in continuing to adapt these scripts for alternative therapeutic exploratory exercises.

Several of the participants found that the ChatGPT-generated monologues resonated deeply with the characters that they had come up with, although they had only offered a small number of details about the character and information around what they wanted from the first version of the monologue. These participants related to aspects of the script that had been generated and felt ChatGPT had understood and explored their character appropriately. They felt that the monologue required very little modification as their intentions for the character were clear and felt they had been explored clearly.

One of the participants stated the following about the monologue that Chat GPT had generated, where the prompts she had given it were thought out and intentional - she stated: *"The monologue that ChatGPT created was actually just perfect. I didn't want to change anything" (Session 2).*

Another participant felt herself connecting more to her character as she explored her through the eyes of ChatGPT, through the 'conversation' - the back and forth of changing and editing details about her character she felt she related more strongly and picked up details that she connected with that she had not necessarily consciously thought of before the interaction with ChatGPT. She said, *"The more I explored Sunny, the more I realized she reminded me of my younger self" (Session 2).*

Another interesting and important observation from the research was that the AI-generated content became more emotionally compelling and relatable when the participants provided detailed emotional context in their prompts to ChatGPT. Participants noted that simply requesting a "*sad monologue"* resulted in a generic and shallow response. However, these participants found that when they included character details such as the backstory and deeper emotional nuances, the AI-generated output was significantly more meaningful and impactful.

The above findings interestingly parallel storytelling in Drama Therapy, where clients are encouraged to explore their emotions in depth rather than just surface-level expressions of feeling. In the same way, just as a therapist guides a client to unpack their experiences, AI also requires emotionally specific input to generate responses that feel authentic and impactful to the client.

Participants' reflections supported this idea. One participant noted: *"I realized if I wanted a deeper emotional response from ChatGPT, I had to describe the character's emotions in detail, not just ask for a 'sad monologue'. "* Similarly, another participant observed: *"When I asked for a generic dialogue, it felt robotic. But when I gave it a character's trauma history, it created something surprisingly moving" (Session 2).*

These insights from the session really highlight the importance of emotional depth in this new human-AI interaction, particularly in the creative and therapeutic contexts. It is important to be

aware that while AI can assist in generating expressive content, however it still relies heavily on the user's ability to frame prompts in a way that evokes meaningful emotional engagement.

Please and Thank you ChatGPT - the Importance of Prompting and Iteration

It is important to remember that ChatGPT is a large language model (LLM). LLMs are advanced artificial intelligence systems designed to process and generate human-like text based on vast amounts of data (Knoth et al, 2024: 02). Through the PAR, it was discovered that the AI-generated content is only as effective as the prompts that have been given to it. The participants found that too broad of prompts led to more generic responses, while more specific prompts generated a more meaningful and collaborative narrative for the client. Therefore, the iteration and refinement of the scripts played a big role for some participants in shaping the content that was generated into something useful for the therapy space.

It is also interesting to note that during the discussion with the participants about their use of ChatGPT and the level of comfort they felt using the program, one participant expressed hesitation about how they were phrasing their prompts to ChatGPT, treating it as though it had human emotions, she said: *"At first, I found myself being really polite, like saying 'please' and 'thank you' to ChatGPT, I guess because we're so used to interacting with people that way" (Session 1).*

Another participant responded by acknowledging the habit but noted that over time, they became more direct in their prompting: *"I realized that I didn't need to be so polite because it's just a machine, if anything, being too polite made my prompts less effective. I started being more specific and getting better responses" (Session 2).*

In a study titled "*AI literacy and its implications for prompt engineering strategies,"* this concept of treating generative AI as a human conversational partner was explored (Knoth et al, 2024). Through this study, they researched the communication style within the prompts that revealed how students showed a redundancy to incorporate polite and more socially established elements into their interactions with ChatGPT. The interactions in this study that were explored suggested that they varied with individuals in how they treated the conversation with ChatGPT. Some perceived

the generative AI as an intelligent and conversational partner who could share interests and skills rather than just a tool for generating text (Knoth et al, 2024: 07). Overall the majority of students in this study showed a socially oriented communication style that tended to be more informal and focused on sharing affective and emotional information.

In a contrasting experience with familiarity with ChatGPT, through the first session of my research, the third participant, who was significantly older than the others and was not familiar with using ChatGPT at all. She noted that she needed to focus on refining the prompts for character creation and that she felt almost awkward in writing questions. She said, "*The first few characters didn't fit, so I had to adjust the prompts multiple times until I was happy with the character description" (Session 2)*. She stated further that "*I had to refine it multiple times… The first character wasn't right, so I adjusted the prompts" (Session 2).*

This above idea is supported by relevant literature stating that in order to enhance the output produced by generative models, the prompts have to be repetitively refined (Knoth et al, 2024: 02). The above example of a contrast in experiences, highlights how familiarity with ChatGPT and individual perceptions of AI can influence prompting strategies, with some users naturally adopting a conversational approach while others, particularly those who are less experienced, focused more on refining prompts through trial and error. "The quality of prompt engineering predicted the quality of LLM outputs for their respective tasks to a high degree" (Knoth et al, 2024: 08).

A key tool, in order to get quality and useful generated material from ChatGPT, identified throughout the workshop sessions, was the importance of prompting. The participants expressed a significant lack of understanding of how actual prompting to the language model ChatGPT works and questioned the possibilities for the Drama Therapist to be trained in how to effectively prompt and 'relay' necessary points to ChatGPT. It is therefore necessary for any further research and exploration for the reader to understand how this prompting concept works.

Prompt engineering is the process of creating various input statements (prompts) for AI models to generate text. To get useful responses from large language models (LLMs) it is necessary for the instructions to be clear, or clear guidelines must be given (Knoth et al, 2024: 02). However, it is

necessary to note that even for natural language processing (NLP) professionals, it is difficult to create efficient and generalized prompts as it takes trial and error, iterative testing and "rigorous evaluation of different prompt strategies on actual input-output pairs and large datasets" (Knoth et al, 2024: 02). Prompt engineering requires a level of practice and a level of knowledge of important terminologies and phrasing.

There is still little research on how non-experts create prompts and what factors could help them improve their natural prompting skills (Knoth et al, 2024:02). In my opinion, as the researcher, a more in-depth investigation is necessary.

Another interesting observation about prompting from the research was that while AI's responses are sometimes seen as predictable, they can be adjusted through iteration. Some of the participants felt that the AI-generated scripts were too structured and restrictive for true improvisation, thus limiting the spontaneity that is essential in creative and therapeutic exercises. However, with a shift of mindset, others viewed AI as a "jumping-off point" instead of using the responses as a constraint, rather using it as a tool to generate different ideas rather than relying on it entirely.

This tension between the structure and spontaneity was reflected in participants' experiences. One participant noted how: *"It's useful for getting ideas, but sometimes it's too structured—I want it to surprise me more" (Session 1).* In the same theme but differing experience, another participant highlighted the balance between this predictability and creativity: *"If I tweak the prompts enough, I can get unexpected responses, but it takes effort" (Session one).*

These insights suggested to me that while AI can be a valuable tool in improvisational settings, it requires intentional input from the client and therapist as well as refinement to produce responses that feel dynamic and spontaneous. Rather than the fear of AI replacing human creativity, a shift in mindset can allow the client and therapist to use it as a collaborative aid, helping to spark ideas while leaving room for organic exploration.

The participants expressed how, through the various exercises in the research sessions that they experienced, they discovered how to phrase prompts more effectively for a better AI-generated response, and this was done through trial and error. Initially, some of the individuals experienced frustration, but over time, they gained a deeper understanding of how to communicate with ChatGPT more efficiently. For instance, one participant noted how her understanding improved as she experimented with different wordings, stating, *"At first, I wasn't sure how to ask it questions. Then I started experimenting with different wordings, and suddenly, it was giving me exactly what I needed" (Session 2).* Similarly, another participant emphasized the improved responsiveness of ChatGPT once she learned to give more structured prompts: *"Once I got the hang of giving it structured prompts, it was like it understood exactly what I wanted" (Session 2).*

AI's Role in Improvisation and Role-Play

The AI-generated scripts from Drama Therapy sessions can begin to serve as a 'jumping-off point' for other types of improvisational exercises. One participant stated, *"It allows us to create a structure that we can then improvise off of... It's a new way for people to experience their own stories" (Session 2).* Another participant commented on the session, saying: *"I enjoy the role-play aspect because I find people navigating relationships interesting. I think AI can help facilitate that process" (Session 2).* Roleplay allows the clients to view problematic and different situations from another perspective. Through involving fictional or imagined elements, the participants take on a role or use personification to create opportunities to explore their issues in new ways. This technique provides a space for transformation and exploration that might not always be possible or accessible in everyday lives (Jones, 1996: 95).

The scripts that are generated have the possibility of being used further to explore improvisation of the character in various situations and with various intentions, suited to the therapeutic goals of the clients. The improvisation that is found in using the AI-generated script connects to improvisation found in Drama Therapy theories, specifically looking at role-play as explored by Landy, which allows for emotional expression and meaning-making. Landy's theory is built on the concept that individuals embody multiple roles in life, these roles shape their behaviours,

relationships and ultimately their identity (Landy, 1992: 07). In Landy's role theory, both the client and therapist take on and enact different roles to help the client explore, discover, and reorganize their internal role system that they deal with subconsciously. The goal is to then support clients in recognizing any dysfunctional roles and working towards developing more adaptive and functional ones (Landy, 1992: 07).

One of the participants expressed an experience with the AI-generated improvisation, which aligns with Landy's Role Theory, emphasizing the fluidity of roles in Drama Therapy. In Role Theory, individuals navigate between different roles, sometimes encountering unexpected shifts that challenge their existing perspectives and responses in the moment.

This participant's observation comments on this idea, she stated how — *"Sometimes it surprised me. I'd give it one prompt, expecting a certain response, and it gave me something totally different. That kept me on my toes" (Session 2)*. In the same way that a Drama Therapist might have to encourage clients to explore unfamiliar roles to deepen self-awareness, AI's unexpected responses in sessions can push users to adapt, react, and expand their role in real-time. This mirrors the improvisational nature of Drama Therapy, where spontaneity and surprise can lead to new insights and emotional discoveries.

By engaging with AI in therapy in this way, participants are not only responding to any external prompts but also actively shifting between different roles throughout the exploration—whether as a storyteller, an improviser, or a reflective observer—ultimately enhancing their capacity for creative and therapeutic exploration, which is a goal of therapy.

Therefore, with this in mind, the role-play scripts that are generated by ChatGPT can be used as a form of spontaneous role-play, which aligns with this therapeutic approach of Landy's. Through encouraging flexibility, creativity, and adaptation. Just the same as in improv, where participants respond to situations in the moment and embrace new roles, Drama Therapy invites clients to explore different perspectives of a character, which, as seen above, can be explored through scripts generated by ChatGPT and then performing these scripts. The idea of role theory is to challenge ingrained patterns and roles and help individuals to explore different aspects of their personality and life experiences (Landy, 1993: 09). ChatGPT can then be used to further push the boundaries of these roles and the various aspects of the individual that they are exploring through the role.

Allowing for self-awareness and problem solving, which ultimately can lead to personal integration, and create new, more functional roles in their lives. The improvisational nature of both practices promotes a greater sense of self-awareness, resilience, and the ability to shift perspectives in real time, which can be very transformative in Drama Therapy.

The participants used ChatGPT to generate dialogue between characters and build an interaction script, which was then used in a real-time improvisation. Another participant commented how she *"Love[s] how ChatGPT builds on the dialogue and keeps the scene going" (Session 2).* Although there may be inconsistencies in the generated dialogue and there may be points that the client does not agree with, this allows for a valuable moment for the therapist to push the boundary of distancing and explore further what the client did or did not relate to in the script and unpack the reasons behind it.

The spontaneity of the scripts and unexpected prompts from Chat GPT can empower or give tools to the therapist to push the client to explore perspectives that they may not have considered otherwise. One participant commented on AI's effectiveness in improvisation and how this is dependent on the input of the user. She noted: *"I think the fact that I gave more detail about the character that I wanted to create prior rather than just saying, 'Please create a random character,' actually lined up more with what I wanted" (Session 2).*

The above insight underscores that AI's role in therapy is a responsive tool rather than an independent creator. In Improvisation in Drama Therapy, it is seen that structured input leads to a richer and more aligned output, as an actor might build a scene in theatre with defined character traits. Thoughtful prompts balance out spontaneity that can be expected as it gives the user creative control, thus including ChatGPT as a collaborative partner rather than as a passive generator.

THEME 2: Trusting the Chatbot: Ethical Concerns and Practical Limits of AI in Therapy

Key insights from the data:

From the outset of this research, one of my main concerns and points of contention around the use of AI in therapy, particularly ChatGPT, is how the integration in sessions can be achieved and practiced in an ethical way. There were various ethical concerns, including confidentiality, data security, and AI bias, all of which can have an effect and impact on the client's safety and trust in therapy. There were also several practical limitations and concerns that included the risk of an over-reliance on AI- AI-generated content and the potential for AI to reinforce stereotypes.

Working in the field of Drama Therapy, where the human connection, a sense of spontaneity, and emotional exploration are central pillars, the limitations of AI in therapy must therefore be carefully considered. One participant expressed this exact fear by stating how *"It feels strange bringing AI into a space that is so human-centered. I don't know if it belongs here" (session 2).* The therapist plays a crucial role in mitigating risk through a critical evaluation of all AI- AI-generated content; they are responsible for ensuring it aligns with ethical and therapeutic goals and guidelines. It is important for the therapist and client to remain aware of how AI works. It should be understood that it relies on statistical probabilities rather than actual human understanding, meaning that while it can generate convincing and contextually appropriate responses in moments, these outputs are derived from its training data rather than true comprehension (Padhiyar & Modha, 2024: 85).

Many AI therapy tools are not subject to the same confidentiality regulations as human therapists are held to which could potentially lead to confidentiality risks regarding the user data (Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon, 2023: 11). As one participant so eloquently brought up by stating: *"I created this character with ChatGPT, but is it really my creation, or is it just regurgitating other ideas?" (Session 2).* There is also the concern of over liability in various crisis situations as the chatbot lacks humanistic judgment that is needed for emergency interventions (Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon, 2023: 12).

Before mentioning the limits of AI in therapy, I feel it is important to also note the possible use of AI as a time-saving tool for session preparation for the therapist. One of the participants commented on her use of ChatGPT to prepare for a session and mentioned how: *"Instead of spending an hour brainstorming, I got an entire list of ideas in minutes and just picked what worked best" (Session 1).* She felt that it could be accessed by the therapist to speed up the planning process, which allows them to modify and enhance ideas and personalize them rather than starting from scratch. Another participant mentioned how using ChatGPT in the planning phase of a session *"was like having an assistant—I still had to do the real planning, but it gave me a head start" (Session 2).* She had been exploring its use for generating initial drafts of session plans and then customizing them to suit her client. ChatGPT has the possibility to use prompts from the therapist about what type of session they are looking for and suggest themes, exercises, and various warm-up scenarios, which then need to be adapted based on the client's needs.

The following sub-themes further unpack the data analysis:

The concern for confidentiality and Data security

Participants raised and discussed serious concerns about data privacy, expressing fears that if ChatGPT is to be used in therapy, then the client information could be stored or misused. There was also a level of uncertainty about where the information entered into ChatGPT was stored and who might have access to it. One participant stated: "*I'm not sure what happens to the information once you enter it… where does it go?" (Session 2).* Participants then suggested that AI should be used very cautiously and should not be used to process highly specific and sensitive client information.

In a study titled "*AI Through Ethical Lenses: A Discourse Analysis of Guidelines for AI in Healthcare,"* the above issue of ethics is discussed and outlined (Arbelaez Ossa et al., 2024). AI in the healthcare field is still emerging, with ongoing discussions about the most effective ways to ensure its ethical use. Importantly, its implementation raises various ethical concerns, particularly regarding the benefits, as patients and communities are in need of reassurance that AI integration will not compromise their rights (Arbelaez Ossa et al., 2024: 02).

The article continues to state how through its analysis of AI guidelines in healthcare, it was revealed that there was a lack of a standardized definition of AI and identified three key perspectives: (1) AI is an inevitable and beneficial advancement, (2) Ethical principles serve as the foundation for guiding AI, and (3) Trust plays a crucial role (Arbelaez Ossa et al., 2024:13). Arbelaez Ossa et al (2024) highlight that while experts and institutions are contributing to the guidelines and have made significant efforts to keep up with AI advancements, the guidelines remain a constant work in progress. Their analysis reveals an ongoing tension between the promotion of AI as a tool for medical progress and the huge necessity for caution, emphasizing the importance of guidance, ethical principles, trust, and responsible implementation (Arbelaez Ossa et al., 2024:14).

Bias and Ethical Considerations in AI-Generated Content

Through the research, there was a strong emphasis on the need for therapist intervention to detect and correct biases in the AI-generated content. The fear was regarding how AI can seemingly reproduce societal biases. One participant stated how *"The first character was a male. I had to explicitly ask for a female immigrant… It didn't default to diversity" (Session 2).* She voiced her concerns that ChatGPT may reflect gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes. Another participant queried the cultural stereotype that was implemented when using ChatGPT to create a duologue along with another participant's character. She said, *"Would the conversation have changed if we had set it in a different location? And if so, I wonder how it would have changed" (Session 2).*

The Participants noticed obvious biases in ChatGPT's responses, they found that the character descriptions often defaulted to certain genders, backgrounds, or archetypes (although this is something that might be useful for distancing and connect to Landy's role play- they feared it might cause clients to feel isolated and make the generated text less relatable). The question was raised as to what the biases in ChatGPT are based on and if there is any way to mitigate the bias.

In an article titled "*A Call to Action on Assessing and Mitigating Bias in Artificial Intelligence Applications for Mental Health"* (Timmons et al., 2022). The above is discussed and unpacked,

reiterating how this issue of AI bias is often overlooked, that algorithms can create biased applications that continue existing social inequalities, and state the danger for individuals to be aware of this (Timmons et al., 2022: 1064). Therefore, it should not be assumed that the abundance of data and advanced analysis methods ensures these technologies are always fair, as that is not necessarily the case. Interestingly, the comparison is given that, just like human decisions can be influenced by past experiences and personal values, algorithms—created by people and trained on human-collected data—can also be biased. There may also be varied goals and values that algorithm developers had that may run contradictory to the goals of the user (Timmons et al., 2022: 1065). However, while a bias is not always negative, it can become problematic when it is based on inaccurate assumptions and stereotypes rather than factual information about a group or individual. When this does happen, it can lead to flawed decision-making and reinforce systemic discrimination.

Just the same as in society, cognitive biases shape how we interact with others and contribute to inequalities in systems; statistical biases in algorithm development can also lead to similar disparities (Timmons et al., 2022: 1065). In these statistical processes, there are bias that arises from unrepresentative data sampling or inaccurate measurements. In the same way that human biases stem from limited exposure to diverse experiences, AI biases result from a lack of diverse and representative data in their system. As AI systems continue to evolve, they will develop patterns similar to those developed in the human brain and therefore face the same limitations. If AI is built upon existing historical and societal biases, it will inevitably reflect and, unfortunately, perpetuate them (Timmons et al., 2022: 1066).

This discussion above, therefore, emphasizes the importance of therapist intervention in recognizing as well as mitigating biases in AI-generated content. As various AI technologies advance, it becomes increasingly necessary to address the potential for these systems to perpetuate existing societal biases based on inequalities, highlighting the need for diverse and representative data in AI development to prevent the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes.

"Confidentiality and data security are major concerns in therapy. Can we trust AI with sensitive client data?" This comment, made during *Session 1*, also highlights the significant ethical challenges surrounding the use of AI in the therapy space. Some potential solutions to these

concerns could include limiting the use of AI to generating general prompts, doing this rather than directly handling client-specific data, which can help mitigate risks related to the client's confidentiality and privacy. However, clear ethical guidelines for AI in Drama Therapy must be developed to ensure that these concerns are addressed more comprehensively.

As the researcher, I observed how the discussion left me reflecting on the ethical implications of AI in therapy. If AI were to become a dominant force in mental health care, would clients feel they were receiving genuine support, or would therapy become a more detached and mechanical process? Through the observations of the participants, it became evident that while AI might hold the ability to enhance efficiency, it cannot replace the warmth, presence, as well intuition that define a therapeutic relationship.

The Risk of Over-Reliance on AI in Therapy

Throughout the research, the participants discussed that there was a concern for the temptation to over-rely on AI-generated prompts and scripts, potentially reducing the creativity and intuition of not only the client but the therapist, too. A participant reflected on this over-reliance by stating how: *"ChatGPT gives me ideas, but I still need to shape them to make them emotionally impactful" (Session 2).*

The accountability that a therapist must take when using AI was noted in the research sessions, discussing how, although ChatGPT does lack a humanistic, emotional intellectual response, the therapist must guide the session to still meet the therapeutic goals. One of the participants captured another fear that many therapists are facing when asked about using AI in therapy as she stated, *"We have to be careful… If we don't integrate it, we'll fall behind, but if we overuse it, we might lose something important in therapy".* There was also a concern for the participants that future therapists might depend too much on AI, therefore limiting their personal skills and techniques in facilitating improvisation and storytelling exercises.

Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon address the broader concern of over-reliance on AI in an article titled: *"Your robot therapist is not your therapist: understanding the role of AI-powered mental health chatbots.*" The article notes how the AI-powered chatbots have the potential to expand access to mental health services by providing affordable, 24/7 support, but that they also present ethical and technical challenges, including the risk of offering inadequate or biased advice. Their research explores how therapeutic misconceptions may arise from misunderstandings about the chatbot's capabilities and, more specifically, regarding the therapeutic relationship (Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon, 2023: 01).

The therapist in the session has the responsibility to oversee and facilitate the conversations with ChatGPT in order to help support the client with their prompts. This is to mitigate the over-reliance on chatbots for therapy that the client may leave the session feeling. It can be misunderstood that the AI Chatbot is what is helping in the therapy. The AI chatbot may foster a false sense of autonomy, which can lead the individuals to believe that they are managing their mental health independently (Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon, 2023: 09). Therefore, it is necessary for the Drama Therapist to still use their authority and skills learnt to assist the client through the creative process.

The therapist should remember that AI cannot interpret nonverbal cues (Khawaja and Bélisle-Pipon, 2023: 04). The therapist in the session, therefore, has this responsibility to read and interpret any nonverbal clues and emotional subtleties that may occur during the ChatGPT interaction. This is important to guide the AI in conversation towards the therapeutic goal of the client and avoid inadequate or even harmful suggestions or prompts for their current emotional state. One participant expressed this by commenting on the use of AI in therapy, stating that she felt this tool: *"Is not about replacing therapy, but about expanding what's possible in the space" (Session 2).*

The paper emphasizes the importance of clear communication about AI limitations, human oversight, and ethical implementation to prevent users from developing false expectations and over-relying on AI therapy. This too can apply to Drama Therapy sessions as the therapist should draw clear boundaries of how exercises should be facilitated and not allow for the chatbot to take over the session and lead the client, they must focus on empowering the client to lead the conversation to ensure the session and ultimately the therapy is successful and transformative.

The overall conversation in the session was about acknowledging that technology is evolving and that ignoring AI could mean missing out on valuable advancements.

THEME 3: AI as a reflective screen: ChatGPT as a Safe Space for Emotional Processing

Key insights from the data:

In Drama Therapy, clients are able to externalize their emotions, reframe experiences, and explore different perspectives through storytelling and role-play. Through the research, it was discovered that the ChatGPT-generated narratives and character dialogues can assist clients to articulate emotions indirectly through role-play, making emotional exploration feel less overwhelming in sessions. The AI- AI-generated characters and monologues act as a dramatic projection of clients' inner conflict, enabling emotional distance to be achieved, which allows for safe self-exploration. The therapists in the research sessions resolved how this form of therapy with ChatGPT could be particularly valuable for clients who may struggle with verbal expression, social anxiety, or trauma. This is because of how accessible emotional and creative expression is with the chatbot helping relay stories, whilst the client is responsible for the decisions of whether this relates to them or not- in the click of a button, a new, and hopefully more relatable story can be achieved.

Drama Therapy has a focus on including the clients in the storytelling process, allowing them to contribute and shape the narrative fosters engagement and self-expression (Salans, 2004: 13). This process gives clients a sense of agency and control over their stories, promoting both emotional healing and self-esteem. Through including the participants in the storytelling process, their engagement and commitment to the creative work are enhanced; this participation helps them gain agency over their healing journey. This collaborative storytelling process fosters a deeper understanding of the client's experiences and promotes therapeutic growth (Labonté, 2011: 157).

One participant who had used ChatGPT before the research reflected on its potential for use in the therapy space with the client. She had previously only used ChatGPT to help plan sessions or prepare stories beforehand. This participant saw the possibilities for AI creating a therapeutic distance as she stated: "*I haven't used this in therapy like this before, but I can see how it could help clients experience their own stories in a different way" (Session 2).*

Another participant suggested how AI can serve as a bridge between internal experience and external expression, through offering language that helps individuals process and communicate complex emotions that they may have. As one participant noted in *Session 2: "I think if anything, it enhances your creativity. It helps you think of new ways you wouldn't have thought about before."* This highlights how ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for clients who struggle with self-expression, helping them unlock creative ways to articulate their emotions.

In a therapeutic context, this use of ChatGPT can create a safe and structured space for emotional exploration, reducing the pressure of immediate verbal articulation and allowing for a gradual self-expression. By providing prompts, vocabulary, or narrative structures, AI can help individuals externalize emotions in a non-judgmental way, making it a valuable tool for reflection and processing in drama therapy and other creative therapeutic settings.

The following sub-themes further unpack the data analysis:

AI Helps Clients Externalize Emotions Through Storytelling

The AI-generated stories allowed the participants to externalize emotions through storytelling – they are able to explore their emotions indirectly by attributing them to fictional characters. One participant expressed this idea as she said that the AI can assist in self-expression: *"For clients who struggle to express themselves, AI provides a framework for them to explore their emotions safely" (Session 2).*

Another participant said how *"It allows clients to experience their own stories in a different way" (Session 2).* This idea of ChatGPT helping to reframe emotions through AI-generated stories comments on the possibility for the interaction with ChatGPT to reduce self-consciousness, allowing for the client to talk about difficult emotions more freely and without the fear of judgment or self-criticism.

This data and feedback collected from the participants in the research links directly to Jones' explanation of dramatic projection in therapy. This research draws from Phil Jones, exploring how through the process and conversations with ChatGPT, the participants subconsciously projected aspects of themselves and their own lived experiences onto their character and thereby externalized their inner conflicts (Jones, 1996: 84). The participants felt a connection and noted a likeness in the stories and struggles of their characters and themselves, even though they had used AI to help create their characters and stories.

The role for the therapist in Drama therapy, when they use ChatGPT in sessions, is to still facilitate the client and work with them to find an "appropriate dramatic vehicle and process to meet the therapeutic needs of the client" (Jones, 1996: 215).

The idea of dramatic projection is reiterated in the following example, using the concept of dramatic expression and making connections to creative work experienced through the research for the participant. This work allowed them to find a narrative distance that was provided by the AI-generated monologues, which once again made emotional exploration feel safer and more accessible. The third participant commented on her own experience, stating how: *"Marie's monologue really allowed me to explore a part of myself I hadn't thought about in years" (Session 2).* This is a direct example of dramatic projection and how dramatic expression facilitates change by creating and providing opportunities for exploration and insight through the enactment of the projected material (Jones, 1996: 84).

The participants distanced themselves from the material and looked at the character and monologue from a different perspective, even though they had participated in the main prompts of creating this character and story. My observation as the researcher is that ChatGPT allowed the client to distance themselves from the writing process, although they had in fact been a co-author and had prompted the main points of the creative process, they could take this step back and imagine that it was solely the work of ChatGPT.

This distancing was so eloquently expressed by one participant as she stated: *"It was strange knowing that a machine wrote my monologue. But at the same time, I liked how unexpected it was—I wouldn't have written it that way myself" (Session 2).* She acknowledged how foreign the

monologue felt whilst speaking back to the distance that was created by reading from this generated script.

This distancing that is created through the AI-generated story, therefore, allows for the client to create a different perspective on themselves or an issue (Jones, 1996: 95). It was then very interesting to witness the participants being witnessed by one another when presenting their duologues written by ChatGPT. One participant commented how she was nervous about performing the monologue in front of the rest of the research group, but once she had performed it she stated that her opinion had changed. She expressed that: *"Performing it felt natural, which surprised me because I thought it would feel robotic" (Session 2).* Connecting to what Jones refers to in Drama Therapy about the therapeutic possibilities of witnessing others and how being given this opportunity to be a witness to oneself are of equal importance (1996: 96). Additionally, distancing provides clients with greater reflection and perspective, as they can almost become the reader of their own story. This technique gives clients the time and space needed to thoughtfully develop the responses they seek to certain situations.

In Drama Therapy, storytelling serves as a crucial and therapeutic tool, enabling clients to externalize and process internal conflicts. Storytelling provides a structured way for the client to organize their own chaotic experiences and emotions (Salans, 2004: 19). By engaging with stories, clients can see reflections of their struggles, which offers a roadmap for personal growth and healing (Salans, 2004: 09). Moreover, storytelling fosters resilience, helping clients to face their "monsters" and reduce their emotional power (Salans, 2004: 19).

Storytelling ultimately serves as a significant method for helping individuals process complex emotions and experiences. The significance of storytelling lies in the client's ability to externalize personal struggles, which allows individuals to reflect on and reframe their experiences. One participant expressed this idea when she stated her opinion on the use of ChatGPT in therapy. She said: *"It's really helpful for people who can't put into words what they're going through. It gives them the literacy and tools to express themselves more clearly" (Session 2).*

Connecting to how stories, as Labonté (2011) notes, have been used for a long time in health research and therapy as a way to structure knowledge and emotional processing. Through the storytelling process, clients can engage with their own narratives in a way that fosters healing and

deeper understanding (Labonté, 2011: 155). One participant stated that she feels AI in the therapeutic space "*Creates accessibility in the moment. It allows clients to explore new narratives they might not have considered" (Session 2).*

AI-Generated Prompts Encourage Emotional Exploration in New Ways

Collaborating with AI on a creative level allowed the participants to explore unexpected perspectives, which prompted them to think about their emotions from a different perspective. These participants reported that the AI-generated stories had brought up and inspired a deeper self-reflective moment than they had previously anticipated with the work. This participant commented how her perspective had changed as she: "*hadn't thought about [her] experience that way before, but ChatGPT's story made [her] see it differently" (Session 2).* The concept of witnessing is observed here in the context of Drama Therapy, where the individual becomes a witness to oneself and their story, and the significance of this allows them to work on emotional transformation (Jones, 1996: 101).

The idea of cognitive reframing was also explored, which is the idea that changing the structure of a narrative can help shift a client's emotional response. One participant commented directly on this outcome of AI providing her with a new perspective as she stated: *"I wasn't sure how I felt about this situation until I saw it play out in an AI-generated script" (Session 2).*

The distancing that ChatGPT creates echo's the opinion of Jones as he comments on the importance of the capability for the participants to develop a response to the creative work and how such a response is the therapeutic work in itself (Jones, 1996: 95). The exploration of this principal allowed them to experience how ChatGPT can work hand in hand with Drama Therapy theories. Showing how the distancing can allow for the client (participant in this case) to then critically reflect on how they related to the character's script and explore what they might have wanted ChatGPT to address. These changes and adaptations can then be further discussed between the therapist and client. Distancing encourages an involvement which is oriented towards reflection and perspective (Jones, 1996: 95).

AI Can Reduce Barriers for Clients Who Struggle with Verbal Expression

The emotional and creative expression that AI in the therapy space offers can allow clients who might struggle with verbal expression for reasons such as social anxiety, trauma, or general difficulty articulating emotions. They can use this innovative tool to access the benefits of storytelling, despite its limitations. One participant commented on this discovery, stating that *"It's really helpful for people who can't put into words what they're going through. It gives them the tools to express themselves" (Session 2).*

Dramatic play can help children express themselves, gain control over their thoughts and emotions, and understand others. The techniques of role-play and storytelling games create a fictional "as if" world where emotions and behaviors are both real and distanced from everyday life, thus promoting emotional exploration (Berghs, Prick, Vissers, & van Hooren, 2022: 02). In a similar way, through this research it is seen that AI-generated prompts can serve as a starting point for conversations, encouraging clients who might otherwise struggle to express themselves.

The AI-generated prompts can also serve as a starting point for conversations that can be explored in further sessions. This tool can help clients who may otherwise struggle to express themselves. One of the participants commented on how they see AI being able to work on reducing barriers to emotional engagement. She noted how she "*can see how this would help someone who struggles to talk about their feelings" (Session 2).*

Individuals can reflect on various perceptions and perspectives through play, relating the play to their everyday responses. This process is essential for exploring how to transform inner states into more appropriate reactions within the context of dramatic reality. Techniques such as symbolic play, storytelling, and pair work, guided by the drama therapist, help facilitate this exploration (Berghs, Prick, Vissers, & van Hooren, 2022: 21).

Chapter 4: Conclusion

AI offers potential benefits for promoting creativity and creating a sense of safe distancing. Participants or clients can collaborate with AI to co-create stories, thereby fostering creativity and self-expression. This can be a particular advantage for clients who may find it challenging to express themselves creatively, as it enables them to articulate their thoughts and feelings through prompts provided to the AI. By integrating AI-driven story generation into drama therapy, therapists and clients gain access to a versatile and dynamic toolset. This toolset enhances the therapeutic experience, encourages deeper engagement, and fosters growth for clients

AI-generated stories can be a very powerful tool for clients to process various emotions through externalized narratives. By crafting stories that mirror their personal experiences or emotions, the clients can step back from their situation and gain a new and different perspective. The ability to watch their struggles unfold within this fictional context allows for greater emotional distance, which can reduce the intensity of feelings that might be difficult for the client to process. This process of externalizing emotions through storytelling has the potential to help the clients see their problems more objectively, which can help to facilitate deeper reflection and understanding. Additionally, AI-generated stories can provide a structured framework for clients to articulate their emotions, especially when they struggle to find the right words.

ChatGPT can also play a key role in role-play therapy, where clients interact with AI-generated characters. These interactions allow clients to explore different roles and perspectives, practice social situations, and experiment with alternative responses in a safe and controlled environment. AI-generated characters can adapt to the client's needs, whether they are role-playing a difficult conversation or navigating a challenging scenario. This flexibility allows clients to refine their responses and rehearse new behaviors without the fear of judgment or real-world consequences. Through these role-playing exercises, clients can build confidence and develop new coping strategies, making it an invaluable resource in therapeutic settings.

In addition, AI-assisted monologues can provide clients with an opportunity to explore past experiences with a sense of psychological distance. When clients use AI to generate monologues,

they can recount their personal stories from a third-person perspective, allowing them to reframe their experiences and gain insight into their emotional responses. This sense of distance can help clients process trauma or difficult memories without becoming overwhelmed by the emotions attached to them. By integrating AI into this process, clients can refine their understanding of their experiences, explore alternative viewpoints, and work through unresolved emotions at their own pace. This combination of externalized expression and therapeutic exploration can help clients achieve emotional resolution and personal growth.

For future individuals interested in this research, I would recommend further investigation into prompt design—possibly creating a structured set of prompts or questions tailored for Drama Therapists to use in sessions. These prompts could serve as practical tools to guide therapists through creative exercises, character exploration, or problem-solving scenarios. By the researcher creating a library of prompts specifically designed for therapeutic contexts, therapists could ensure that AI-generated responses remain aligned with therapeutic goals and facilitate meaningful engagement. This research could explore how different types of prompts influence client responses, emotional engagement, and creative expression within sessions.

Another fascinating area of research would be examining how the AI-generated scripts or dialogues could be used as interactive tools for exploring alternative outcomes to situations or decisions clients may be facing. In Drama Therapy, role-play and storytelling are often used to help individuals gain new perspectives on their experiences. Therefore, through integrating ChatGPT, therapists could generate multiple variations of a scene or scenario, allowing clients to examine different possibilities, reflect on their choices, and rehearse new ways of responding to challenges. This approach could be particularly useful in helping clients build resilience, enhance their decision-making skills, and experiment with new narratives in a safe and controlled environment.

Further research could also investigate how engaging with AI-generated scripts affects clients' emotional processing and problem-solving abilities. Are clients more open to exploring difficult emotions when interacting with AI? Does seeing multiple potential outcomes increase a sense of agency and empowerment for the client? Another very interesting angle could be studying whether clients feel a greater sense of detachment or safety when discussing scenarios generated by AI

rather than their own lived experiences, and how that influences their willingness to engage with personal themes.

Additionally, future studies could explore the ethical implications of using AI-generated scripts in therapy. How can therapists ensure that AI-generated responses remain therapeutic and do not inadvertently reinforce any random and unhelpful narratives? What safeguards should be in place to prevent bias in AI-generated content? Understanding these questions would be crucial in shaping best practices for integrating AI into Drama Therapy effectively and ethically.

Looking ahead, I am excited to explore how AI can be integrated into therapy in a way that enhances its benefits while preserving the core of human connection that is so special to Drama Therapy. Striking this balance will be essential to ensuring that technology serves as a valuable tool rather than a replacement, supporting rather than overshadowing the therapeutic process.

References

Arbelaez Ossa, L., Milford, S.R., Rost, M., Leist, A.K., Shaw, D.M. and Elger, B.S., 2024. AI through ethical lenses: a discourse analysis of guidelines for AI in Healthcare. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, *30*(3), p.24.

Berghs, M., Prick, A.E.J., Vissers, C. and van Hooren, S., 2022. Drama therapy for children and adolescents with psychosocial problems: A systemic review on effects, means, therapeutic attitude, and supposed mechanisms of change. *Children*, *9*(9), p.1358.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77–101.

Dhiman, V.K., 2024. The emergence of AI in mental health: A transformative journey. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, *22*(1), pp.1867-1871.

Dickinson, P. and Bailey, S., 2024. *The drama therapy decision tree: Connecting drama therapy interventions to treatment*. Intellect.

Emunah, R., 2019. *Acting for real: Drama therapy process, technique, and performance*. Routledge.

Fleishman, M. (2017). Towards a Pedagogy of Practice-as-Research. In: Bala, S., Gluhovic, M., Korsberg, H., Röttger, K. (eds) International Performance Research Pedagogies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Gersie, A., 1997. *Reflections on Therapeutic Storymaking: The use of stories in groups*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London

Grodniewicz, J.P. and Hohol, M., 2023. Waiting for a digital therapist: three challenges on the path to psychotherapy delivered by artificial intelligence. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *14*, p.1190084.

Hadjipanayi, C., Banakou, D. and Michael-Grigoriou, D., 2023. Art as therapy in virtual reality: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality*, *4*, p.1065863.

Jackson, C. 2023. *The big issue: The brave new world of AI therapy*. [online] www.bacp.co.uk. Available at: https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-journals/therapy-today/2023/september-2023/the-big-issue/.

Jones, P., 1996. *Drama as therapy: Theatre as living*. Psychology Press. London: Routledge

Jones, P., 2007. *Drama as therapy volume 1: Theory, practice and research*. Routledge.

Khawaja, Z. and Bélisle-Pipon, J.-C. 2023. Your robot therapist is not your therapist: understanding the role of AI-powered mental health chatbots. *Frontiers in digital health*, [online] 5. doi: https://doi.org/10.3389/fdgth.2023.1278186.

Labonté, R., 2011. Reflections on stories and a story/dialogue method in health research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *14*(2), pp.153-163.

Landy, R.J., 1991. The drama therapy role method. *Dramatherapy*, *14*(2), pp.7-15.

Lesley, D. and Mcadams, K. 2021. *The Use of Digital Mediums in Expressive Arts Therapy The Use of Digital Mediums in Expressive Arts Therapy*. [online] Available at: https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1419&context=expressive_theses.

Nelson, R., 2006. Practice-as-research and the problem of knowledge. *Performance research*, *11*(4), pp.105-116.

Owen, I.R., 1995. Social constructionism and the theory, practice and research of psychotherapy: A phenomenological psychology manifesto. *Boletin de Psicologia*, *46*(1), pp.161-186.

Padhiyar, R. and Modha, S., 2024. Impact of the usage of ChatGPT on creativity among postgraduate student. *Int. J. Sustain. Soc. Sci.(IJSSS)*, *2*, pp.83-92.

Salans, M., 2004. *Storytelling with children in crisis: Take just one star-How impoverished children heal through stories*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Schroer, A. 2023. *What is artificial intelligence? How does AI work?* [online] Builtin. Available at: https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence.

Timmons, A.C., Duong, J.B., Simo Fiallo, N., Lee, T., Vo, H.P.Q., Ahle, M.W., Comer, J.S., Brewer, L.C., Frazier, S.L. and Chaspari, T., 2023. A call to action on assessing and mitigating bias in artificial intelligence applications for mental health. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *18*(5), pp.1062-1096.

Zhu, S., Wang, Z., Zhuang, Y., Jiang, Y., Guo, M., Zhang, X. and Gao, Z., 2024. Exploring the impact of ChatGPT on art creation and collaboration: Benefits, challenges and ethical implications. *Telematics and Informatics Reports*, *14*, p.100138.

Addendum A

Research Consent Form

Ethics Protocol Number:…WSOA20241016-7

Title of project: Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in drama therapy
Name of researcher: Alexandra Rosendorff

I ……. agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me, and I understand what my participation will involve.

(Please circle either "yes" or "no" below:)

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous YES NO

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report YES NO

I agree that the interview/ group discussions may be audio recorded YES NO

I agree that the interview/ group discussions video recorded YES NO

I agree to take part in workshop/ focus group participation YES NO

I agree that the researcher may take photos of me (but not my face) YES NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

IYUNIVESHITI YASEWITWATERSRAND | YUNIVESITHI YA WITHWATERRAND
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: Dr. petro.jansevanvuuren@wits.ac.za • **PROJECTS DIRECTOR**: Hamish.Neill@wits.ac.za | **ADMINISTRATOR Talita.Ntholeng@wits.ac.za • STUDENT RECRUITMENT, SCHOLARSHIPS & WELFARE** Omphemetse.Mokgosi@wits.ac.za • **GENERAL ENQUIRIES**: info.dfl@wits.ac.za • WEBSITE: www.dramaforlife.co.za • **FACEBOOK, INSTGRAM, TWITTER**: @dflwits **PHYSICAL ADDRESS**: 1 Jan Smuts Ave, Braamfontein, 2050 • **POSTAL ADDRESS:** Private Bag X3, WITS, Johannesburg, 2050

Addendum B

Participant Information Sheet

Ethics Protocol Number:…… WSOA20241016-7

Good day

My name is Alexandra Rosendorff (Storger) and I am a Masters student in Drama For Life (DFL) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am investigating the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in drama therapy under the supervision of Monique Hill. The aim of this research project is to investigate to what extent Drama Therapists are open to the use of AI, specifically the chatbot program ChatGPT in therapy sessions.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a workshop and focus group discussion after the workshop. This activity will involve a workshop in which I will facilitate an example of the use of AI in therapy as well as a lead discussion to its potential benefits and limits. I plan on having two workshops which will take around 90 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The workshop and discussion will be as confidential as possible within the group, however in the recording I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be asking your professional opinion and thoughts on the topic and ask for honest reflection on the process experienced. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the workshop and discussion or resume another time.

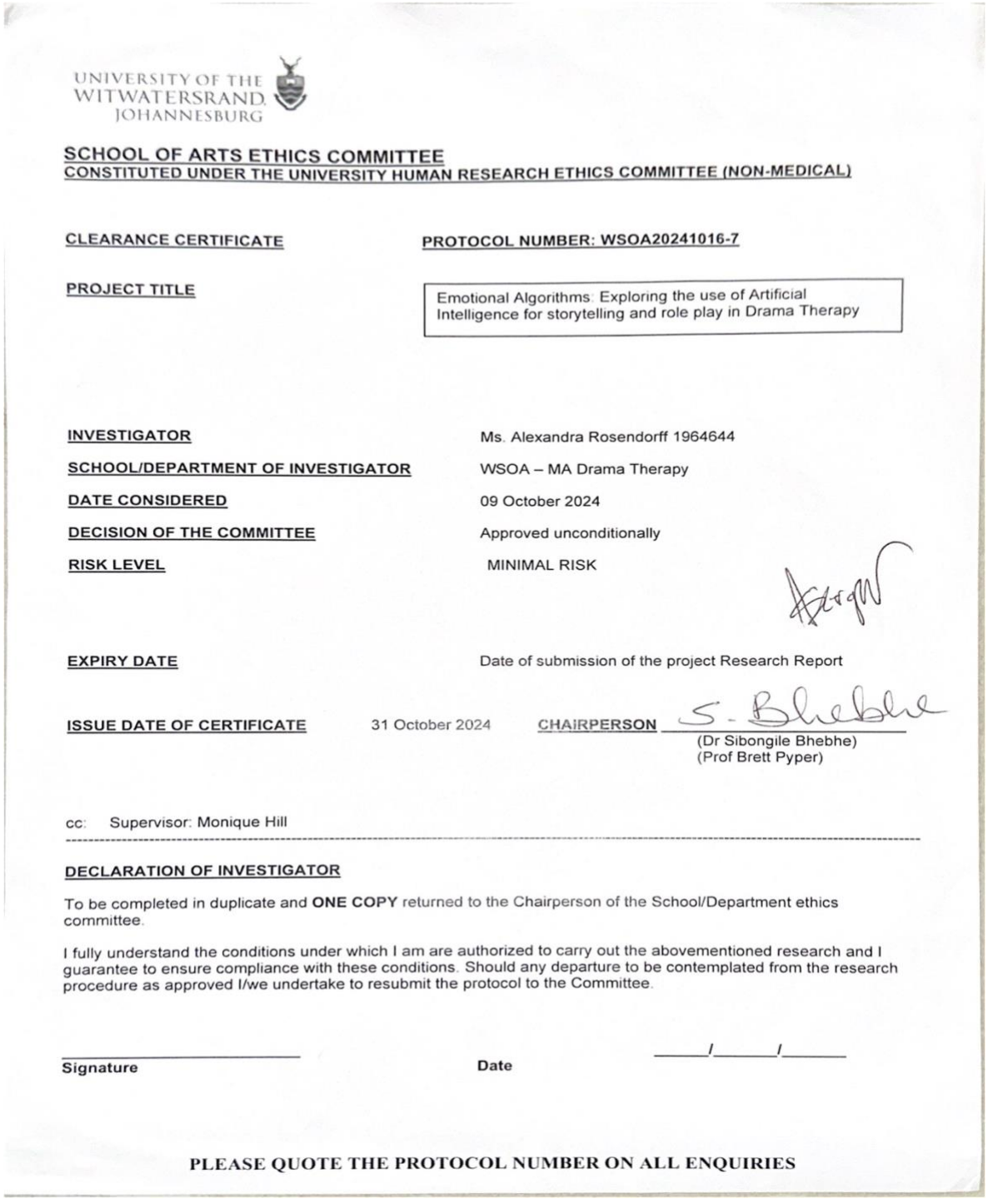
If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected computer folder and will be kept for 5 years. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email shaun.schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,
Alexandra Rosendorff

Researcher:
Alexandra Rosendorff 1964644@students.wits.ac.za 078 2955 036

Supervisor:
Monique Hill , monique.hill@wits.ac.za

Addendum C



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF ARTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **PROTOCOL NUMBER: WSOA20241016-7**

PROJECT TITLE Emotional Algorithms: Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for storytelling and role play in Drama Therapy

INVESTIGATOR	Ms. Alexandra Rosendorff 1964644
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WSOA – MA Drama Therapy
DATE CONSIDERED	09 October 2024
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	MINIMAL RISK
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 31 October 2024 **CHAIRPERSON** S. Bhebhe
(Dr Sibongile Bhebhe)
(Prof Brett Pyper)

cc: Supervisor: Monique Hill

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ **Signature** **Date** _____/_____/_____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES