

Public Abstract

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Title: THE SPACE BETWEEN: UNCOVERING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ACTOR COMMUNICATION

Using the qualitative methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, this dissertation documents student actors' lived experience of actor communication in performance. The author locates this study in relation to actor training, rehearsal methods, director training, and psychoanalytic theory. This hermeneutic phenomenological study examines the lived experience of eight undergraduate student actors who had performed at the University of Missouri and had experienced actor communication in performance and/or rehearsal. Participants were interviewed in two semi-structured focus group interviews with follow up individual interviews. The data collected from the participants was transcribed, coded, and managed with HyperResearch software. Max van Manen's thematic analysis was employed and participants verified the final analysis of the lived experience of actor communication. A brief secondary analysis using the critical lens of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory was used to explore the unconscious structures of transference in actor communication. The actors' lived experience of actor communication was found to be a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon described as: a connection between actors which is only understood through feeling or sense, having certain necessary conditions, obstacles and variable conditions which may impact the connection; a blurring of reality, identity, relationships, and emotions; and having a specific location with defined limits – a space between actors. The absence or presence of actor communication has significant impact on an actor's process and perception of her acting partner. The strong emotional responses towards acting partners suggest that the structure of transference is also a part of the process of actor communication.