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Therapeutic workforce development: Technology and the professional persona

ABSTRACT

The Animation Project (TAP) is a therapeutic workforce development program that teaches put-at-risk youth digital technology skills and develops core professional skills. Drama therapy theory and interventions are often employed by TAP creative arts therapists in guiding young adults in their professional development. A case illustration is presented to showcase how a participant may move through the levels and how role theory has been used to develop the professional persona alongside technical advancement. The results of this illustration indicate that role theory and method interventions positively enhanced a TAP intern's professional persona alongside technical skill acquisition.

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MOTS-CLÉS

dramathérapie
main-d'œuvre
   thérapeutique
jeunes à risqué
technologie
théorie des role
thérapie des arts
   créatifs

DÉVELOPPEMENT DE LA MAIN-D'ŒUVRE THÉRAPEUTIQUE: LA TECHNOLOGIE ET L'IDENTITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE

RÉSUMÉ

The Animation Project (TAP) est un développement de la main d'œuvre thérapeutique qui enseigne les mises en dangers des compétences des jeunes en technologie numérique et développe les compétences professionnelles de base à connaitre. La théorie et les interventions de la dramathérapie sont souvent utilisées par les thérapeutes des arts créatifs de TAP afin de guider les jeunes adultes dans leur développement professionnel. Une illustration de cas est présentée pour montrer comment un participant peut évoluer et comment la théorie des rôles a été utilisée afin de développer l'identité professionnelle parallèlement au progrès technique. Les résultats indiquent que la théorie des rôles et les interventions méthodologiques ont eu un effet positif sur l'identité professionnelle du stagiaire LPA tout en acquérant des compétences techniques. Les résultats de cette illustration indiquent que la théorie des rôles et les interventions méthodologiques ont amélioré positivement la personnalité professionnelle d'un stagiaire LPA parallèlement à l'acquisition de compétences techniques.

PALABRAS CLAVE

dramaterapia
desarrollo terapéutico
   de la fuerza laboral
para jóvenes en riesgo
tecnología
teoría de roles
terapia de artes
   creativas

DESARROLLO TERAPÉUTICO DE LA FUERZA LABORAL: LA TECNOLOGÍA Y LA PERSONA PROFESIONAL

RESUMEN

The Animation Project (TAP) es un programa terapéutico de desarrollo de la fuerza laboral que enseña habilidades en tecnología digital a jóvenes en riesgo desarrollando habilidades esenciales para un crecimiento profesional. La teoría de dramaterapia y las intervenciones a menudo son empleadas por terapeutas de artes creativas de TAP para guiar a los jóvenes en su desarrollo profesional. Se presenta un caso para ilustrar cómo un participante puede moverse a través de los niveles y cómo se ha utilizado la teoría de roles para desarrollar la personalidad profesional junto con el avance técnico. Los resultados de esta ilustración indican que la teoría de roles y las intervenciones de métodos mejoraron positivamente la personalidad profesional de un pasante de TAP junto con la adquisición de habilidades técnicas.

INTRODUCTION

Literature pertaining to youth and the workforce raises concerns about whether or not we are providing young people with the skills necessary to succeed in a globalized market (Hull et al. 2009; Loprest et al. 2019). Rapid advances in technology have resulted in an influx of jobs in the tech industry that favour workers who are highly skilled and highly educated (Carnevale and Smith 2016). Those with access to postsecondary training continue to find secure jobs that also provide them with additional advanced training, which only deepens the inequity between those with resources and those without.

Among those who lack access to the cutting edge technology and postsecondary training needed to secure entry-level positions in the technology sector are put-at-risk youth (Carnevale and Smith 2016).

Drama therapy has a strong history of demonstrating efficacy with put-at-risk[1] youth in various systems (Bassingthwaighte 2017; Haen 2014; Moore et al. 2017; Snow and D'Amico 2015). This embodied practice could also offer youth the opportunity to behaviourally rehearse workforce development skills while upholding the wealth of knowledge that is already stored within the body. As opposed to moulding youth into hirable, reliable workers, drama therapy could also prepare young people to enter the workforce by finding the version of professional that will work best for them within larger systems of power and oppression that are too often rigged against them. Through play, embodiment and metaphor, drama therapy creates opportunities for deconstructing power dynamics and disrupting rigid roles and systems, empowering youth to tell their stories and create new narratives.

This article will review the literature surrounding therapeutic workforce development programs in the United States (with a focus on New York City) and the potential of drama therapy to support put-at-risk youth in successfully navigating their transition to the workforce. One existing model for doing so is The Animation Project (TAP), a therapeutic workforce development organization that provides put-at-risk youth with the technological and therapeutic resources they need, opening up pathways for them to pursue careers in the animation sector. While TAP's therapeutic model was born out of art therapy and currently incorporates all the creative arts therapies, this article explores the program through a drama therapy lens, which is frequently employed. A case illustration of a TAP participant will be presented and discussed and areas for future research and growth will be considered.

The authors of this article (hereafter referred to as 'we') are situated in the organization as follows: clinical program director (Meredith Dean); clinical workforce development manager (Natasha Amendolara); and TAP's former program coordinator and lead therapist (Julie Regula). All three are trained as drama therapists and employ role theory, role method, Developmental Transformations and therapeutic theatre interventions in their clinical work. Natasha was the primary TAP therapist for the participant profiled in the case illustration, to follow. Meredith and Julie also had working relationships with the participant.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Put-at-risk youth and the workforce

Besen-Cassino (2014) investigated the racial and socio-economic inequities that impact job access for American young people. Her research confirmed that systemic disparities for Black and Brown bodied, low-income youth create significant barriers to entry into the workforce and greatly limit access to sustainable jobs that pay a living wage. The US Department of Labor (2018) defined the youth labour force as 16- to 24-year olds who are currently working or actively looking for work. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from July 2018 indicated that employment rates were at 58% for White youth, 47.2% for Black youth and 51.7% for Hispanic youth. Unemployment rates were at 7.6%

1. In this article, the term put-at-risk youth is used to refer to those who have been systemically oppressed due to race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, access to education, justice system involvement or exposure, job-readiness training, immigration status and more.

for White youth, 16.5% for Black youth and 10.8% for Hispanic youth, showing little change from the year prior.

Many put-at-risk youth are also justice-involved. Research from the National Youth Employment Coalition suggested that workforce development programs are under serving justice-involved youth (DeJesus et al. 2017). They found that many of the programs and services put in place with the intention of connecting young people to job readiness trainings and opportunities for employment were falling short of reaching those goals. Many workforce agencies struggled to reach youth put-at-risk, choosing instead to work with young people who were 'easier to serve' (DeJesus et al. 2017).

Throughout New York City, there are a variety of programs that offer workforce development training for put-at-risk youth. The Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON), a community arts and wellness branch of the New York City Department of Probation, currently partners with Columbia Business School to provide free courses on entrepreneurial design thinking that have the potential to lead to a $5000 NeON Workforce Development Grant (NeON and Columbia Business School 2019). Organizations like Girls Who Code and All Star Code focus on preparing young people specifically for entry into the field of computer science, but there is a lack of programming focused on building sustainable careers for the technology-based artist. Furthermore, these programs do not have a therapeutic component and do not offer direct, on-site support throughout the training process.

Psychotherapy and workforce development

The literature cites a growing need for job readiness training programs for put-at-risk youth that not only build practical professional skills, but also focus on the psychological well-being of participants (Matsuba et al. 2008). DeJesus et al. (2017) called for increased access to strength-based workforce development programs that facilitate socioemotional development, foster independence, and provide opportunities for connection and collaboration in addition to professional development. They found that the non-profit organizations and systems that were most successful not only gave young people second chances, but supported them through third, fourth and fifth chances (DeJesus et al. 2017).

Experience suggests that therapy paired with workforce development could fill the need to connect put-at-risk youth with the social, emotional, interpersonal and professional skills and opportunities necessary to secure a sustainable career with a living wage. While building job readiness skills is a part of much career counselling and vocational counselling, as well as a component of general psychotherapy and many outpatient treatment programs, there is a lack of literature surrounding therapeutic workforce development. Specifically, there is no known literature written about therapists who are practising therapeutic workforce development.

Creative arts therapy and workforce development

In the existing body of literature, there is little research available surrounding the intersection of workforce development and creative arts therapy. Austin (2009) examined the ways in which incorporating digital arts technology

into art therapy could actively contribute to innovations in tech and provide young people with new tools for creative self-expression. Kavitski and Austin (2018) went on to discuss TAP's use of digital arts technology as a therapeutic medium and a way to build computer competency.

In many ways, the structure of TAP parallels a professional animation studio, allowing participants to find an individual area of focus while still contributing to the larger team. TAP values transparency, growth, development and continued support. For Kavitski and Austin (2018), part of continued support meant providing young people with access to cutting-edge software, tangible job skills and connections with industry professionals. Their vision included placing participants in both internships and externships that could lead to sustainable employment in the future.

Dean et al. (2019) explored TAP's use of animation as both a projective and a tool for workforce development through the lens of drama therapy. As discussed above, their article explores how participants have the opportunity to embody the role of professional and behaviourally rehearse critical life skills including time management, accountability and reliability. The group becomes a microcosm of the professional world in which participants build the interpersonal skills necessary to work collaboratively and navigate conflict.

Some TAP therapists use a drama therapy lens in developing the professional persona of our participants. While the organization does not take on a solely role theory-based stance or always employ the method, we draw on role theory to support interventions and curriculum development. Role method classically involves invoking the role, naming the role, embodying the role, reflecting on the role play, integrating roles and social modelling (Landy 1993). The goal is for clients to expand the repertoire of roles available to them and find balance and integration among contradictory roles (Landy 2008). In TAP groups, one of the first roles invoked is the professional.

Participants in TAP groups are treated as professionals working at an animation studio. There are deadlines to be met on the production schedule, unique responsibilities assigned to each person, and a team that is dependent on them. Unlike in the professional world, TAP offers participants a chance to explore and take risks (e.g. presenting and receiving feedback about digital artwork in front of an audience of peers, seasoned animators and management) in a contained, therapeutic environment.

TAP provides group members with space to experiment with what it means to be professional, giving them opportunities to learn from mistakes and find the version of professional that feels right for them. Invoking, naming and embodying the role of professional early on in the process not only lays the groundwork for participants to enter the workforce, but also helps to foster a sense of empowerment and agency that allows group members to be able to guide themselves towards the future they envision. At TAP, emphasis is placed on the social modelling aspect of role theory. Interns not only explore the quality and performance of the role of professional, but also learn to effectively model this role out in the community.

In role theory, the therapist often initially acts as a guide for the client until they are able to internalize this role and become their own guide (Landy 2008). This transition is built into the TAP model: as young people journey through

the program, they move from the role of participant, to intern, to professional. As the therapeutic component of the program gradually shifts, participants are increasingly able to internalize the therapist as guide.

TAP'S THERAPEUTIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The TAP program pairs Licensed Creative Arts Therapists (LCATs) with professional animators in community group settings to support participants in telling stories, creating images, learning transferable technical skills, developing their authentic professional personas, and connecting to jobs in the digital arts sector. Programming operates in schools, probation sites, community sites, family court systems and detention centres in the most underserved neighbourhoods of New York City.

At the core of TAP's mission is a belief in opportunity, equity and access (Dean et al 2019). We reach into all five New York City boroughs and recruit amongst the most put-at-risk youth in our communities. Currently, these young people are systemically barred access to careers in the animation sector. TAP recognizes the need for widespread social change to combat systemic oppression and aims to help put-at-risk youth become as successful as possible within a system that actively works against them. The mostly Black and Brown bodied, low-income male, female and non-binary young people we work with hold stories, images and wisdom that can dramatically impact a sector that is primarily White, male and upper class. Our group members use story and character to drive the technology into territories that will not only level the playing field but also transform the industry.

There are three phases of TAP's programming: 3D Computer Animation Therapy Groups, paid Intern Training Groups with networking opportunities and STUDIO, a professional studio that hires former TAP animation interns as apprentices. A thorough explanation of TAP's 3D Computer Animation groups has been discussed in Kavitski and Austin (2019) and Dean et al. (2019). This article will focus on our tiered workforce development programming.

TAP's Training Groups are incentivized and paid and have multiple sub-levels: NeON groups, Animation Labs, Intern Program and STUDIO. Each component addresses the same core professional skills: communication, reliability, accountability and teamwork. These levels of programming are intentionally designed so that as young adults progress through them, they journey from more therapeutic intervention to less; from less focus on technical skill development to more; from more control over what they produce to less control; and from telling their own stories to telling clients' stories.

When studios hire people, they do not hire people entirely for skill. They hire people for *who they are* (Kim Lee, personal communication 2019). An adequate level of skill can get a person in the door. What gets a person *hired* in the animation sector is an openness to learning more and how well they work with others (Kim Lee, Matt Munn, Mark Osbourne, Lisa Goldman and Alan Lewis, personal communication 2019). TAP's ultimate goal is to shape the young adults we work with into independent, professional, skilled, reliable and hirable team players.

Incentivized and paid Intern Training Groups

The Animation Project

Guidelines for NeON Group Participation

1 We are 16-24 years old

This is a workforce development program

2 We are on time

Get here early. Participants who arrive 15 minutes late or do not stay for the whole group will not be paid

3 We are signed in

We sign in before the start of group.

4 We are a team of 12

Group capacity is 12. Number 13 will not be able to attend group that day. Come back early next time!

5 We are valued

We are paid for our participation.

One $15 gift card for each participant is given out at the end of group.

Figure 1: TAP NeON guidelines.

NeON groups: Trainees

NeON is a progressive arm of the New York City Department of Probation that has transformed seven probation sites into community centres in neighbourhoods with a large concentration of people on probation. Stakeholder groups, comprised of local community organizations and business owners, people on probation, probation officers and others choose arts, sports and wellness programs relevant to their community and make them available at no cost to people on probation and neighbourhood residents. TAP works at one NeON site in each NYC borough, serving young adults from 16 to 24 years old.
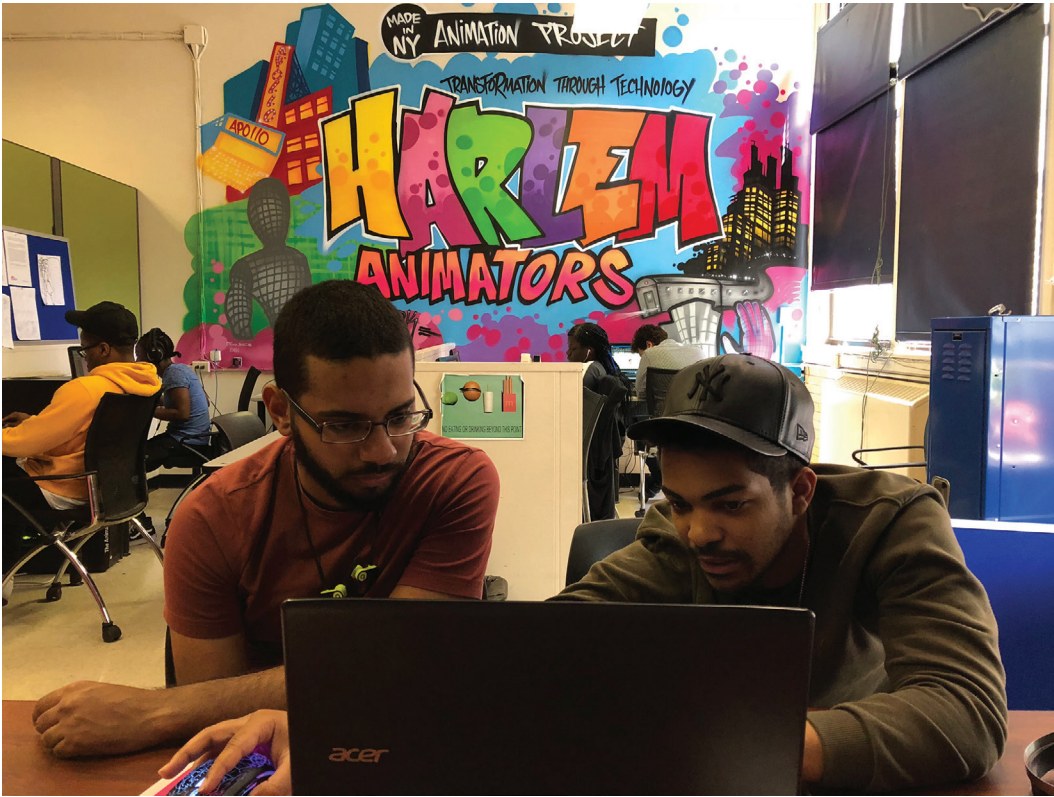
Figure 2: Harlem Lab Photograph: TAP Animator assisting Harlem Lab Associates to hone their skills on the 3D software in preparation for TAP's internship program.

In NeON groups, group members are referred to as Trainees, marking a shift from the role of Participant in a school-based group. Young adults who attend TAP's NeON groups are eligible for a $15 VISA gift card as an incentive for their participation, marking their first professional step of financial management. Participation in the program is voluntary and there is no attendance requirement. However, while our teams welcome a participant at any point in the 90-minute group, the trainee must arrive within fifteen minutes of the group start time and stay for the duration of group in order to receive their incentive.

Animation Labs: Associates

Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who have been referred from the community may engage in ongoing technical training and professional development at TAP's Animation Labs, two satellite programs located in the community that offer for motivated young adults more time to build the basic skills needed for formal application to TAP's internship program. Support and instruction from an LCAT and animator are available once per week during the three-hour classes, which operate on a curriculum designed to set Associates up with the technical and professional skills they need to successfully advance within the program.

The Animation Project

TAP Intern's Creed

1 **we show up**
We arrive on time and stay for the duration of the group.

2 **we focus**
We have a lot of work to do.
We text + chat outside of group.

3 **we communicate**
We notify TAP staff of availability and planned absences and/or latenesses.

4 **we show respect**
We are a team; we embody and promote teamwork.
We are supportive of one another.

5 **we take care of our technology**
We respect all equipment in the office and at partner sites.

6 **we are ethical**
We model TAP's mission and organizational values: transparency, collaboration, support, growth and development.

Figure 3: Intern creed.

As Associates, our young people are eligible to receive a monthly stipend as a further step in their financial literacy. Disciplined attendance, punctuality, self-selection for tasks and technical skill progression are expected. Those struggling to meet these expectations are offered further support from the creative arts therapist and animator but are not guaranteed continued placement in the program if benchmarks are not met.

The role of the Animation Lab therapist is to co-lead the group, focusing on crafting opening and closing rituals that facilitate self-motivated learning, professional goal setting and preparation for building skills according to the day's curriculum. The same TAP model core professional skill development is addressed and practised through various creative arts therapy interventions. Because participants at this level are in the earlier stages of embodying their professional selves, challenges with punctuality, time management, collaboration, motivation and communication arise more frequently. Therapeutic support and mentorship are more intentionally baked into the curriculum.

Figure 4: Sweatshirt photograph: TAP's fall 2018 graduating intern class.

Internship program: Interns

Young people in our Animation Labs who demonstrate basic technical skills and articulate a passion for developing more can apply for our intensive internship program. Groups are co-led by a Supervising Animator and LCAT. We encourage applicants to attend at least one TAP NeON group in order to gain exposure to our core therapeutic workforce development model and our mission. We intentionally craft diverse cohorts, akin to casting an ensemble, with some interns coming from probation and community sites and others with greater access to resources from places like the High School of Art and Design and Fashion Institute of Technology. The cross-pollination between people of various backgrounds and skill levels lends itself to building a dynamic and innovative team.

TAP's intern program curriculum includes industry-standard training in Maya software, studio visits, guest lectures, networking and business training. Each cohort of twelve interns (ages 17–24) runs for four months and meets four days per week for three-hour sessions. The group works as a team on structured projects that include all aspects of the 3D animation pipeline including storyboards, character design, modelling, rigging, animating, lighting and rendering.

Our interns are closely supervised and offered ongoing mentorship from former interns and professionals in the industry. TAP has high expectations of their production deliverables and professional conduct. 75 per cent attendance is required in order to be paid. TAP interns are expected to notify their therapist in advance of lateness and absences and are expected to commit to the full duration of the program. Professional goals unique to this group include developing a personal reel, crafting a resume and establishing network connections.

At this level of our workforce development program, the TAP therapist's role shifts from co-leader to supportive staff. The bulk of each three-hour training day is primarily devoted to the 3D pipeline curriculum. The

therapist leads opening and closing rituals for each session that focus more acutely on the development of the professional persona and related skills. Opening rituals might include embodied explorations of the role of professional and behavioural rehearsals of various interview and workplace scenarios. Therapeutic goals include guiding the group towards developing sound professional boundaries, fostering independent thinking and action, giving and receiving feedback. The TAP intern program therapist is also available for individual support, as needed or indicated.

While this level of therapeutic workforce development has stricter expectations, the program is designed to support the layered complex needs of young adults, some of whom are justice-involved and the vast majority of whom have not had prior experience in a professional environment. The workforce development team offers candid and supportive feedback and multiple chances. We see any challenges related to upholding professional expectations as opportunities for support and growth, as put-at-risk youth may experience dips in confidence, lack of social and familial support and limited access to resources. In our experience, these issues are of particular consideration when navigated alongside the stressors of training for the workforce.

STUDIO: Apprentices

After rigorous training, our interns are eligible for positions as apprentices at STUDIO, a competitive professional atelier with paying clients and projects. STUDIO is the full realization of TAP's mission and was created in order to bridge the gap for trained TAP interns who are looking for entry-level positions but still needing on-the-job experience. Apprentices are expected to employ the professional skills they developed during their internship under real-world job expectations. STUDIO is partnered with local gaming, animation and visual effects companies who provide internships, shadowing and mentorship. Apprentices are part-time employees at TAP and file W2 paperwork; for most, it is their first professional job.

In this final level of our workforce development program, an LCAT is available offline for support but a therapeutic element is not woven into the curriculum. This solidifies TAP's organizational goal of launching the young people we work with into the workforce, equipped with an internalized therapist.

METHODOLOGY: CASE ILLUSTRATION

Etana was chosen as a case example because at the time of this writing, she had not only assumed all roles within our therapeutic workforce development model, but also had a very significant shift in role repertoire that could illustrate how drama therapy may support the shaping of a professional persona. In keeping with our organizational value of transparency, we approached the apprentice presented in this case example for permission to write about her trajectory within TAP. She gave consent to be written about and was interviewed to fill in background details.

To maintain her privacy, we invited the case illustration subject to partner us in changing her name and identifying data by choosing a pseudonym, different age and home borough. She took two weeks to consider this and then thoughtfully approached the authors with her chosen information. When asked how she chose her name, she reported that she Googled names that mean 'brave'. She landed on 'Etana', Hebrew in origin, meaning 'strength of

purpose' and 'attractive and unusual'. She chose the borough of Manhattan because 'that's where most of the animation studios are'. It is important to note that Etana was made aware of and consented to the fact that those of us within the TAP community will be able to easily identify who she is but that those within the larger reading audience will not.

Etana's case illustration is primarily considered through the theoretical lens of role theory in order to illuminate how drama therapy theory can support a client's professional development. Some role method interventions and embodied explorations were also directly employed by the drama therapist in Etana's group process. The role repertoire presented, based on Landy's (1993) Taxonomy of Roles, explores roles that were invoked by Etana. Roles marked 'E' indicate those she named herself; roles marked 'C' indicate those named by the clinical team.

Etana: Presenting role repertoire	Etana: Expanded role repertoire
Competitor (E), Fighter (E), Young Woman (E), Artist (E), Unusual One (E), Stubborn One (E), Private One (E), Brave One (E), Strong One (E), Outsider (E), Introvert (C), Loner (C), Isolated One (C), Serious One (C), Tenacious One (C), Rigid One (C), Proud One (C), Novice (C)	Competitor (E), Fighter (E), Young Woman (E), Artist (E), Unusual One (E), Stubborn One (E), Private One (E), Brave One (E), Strong One (E), Outsider (E), Professional Networker (E), Persistent One (E), Teammate (E), Teacher (E), Insider (E), Professional (E), Modeler (E), Public Speaker (E), Trickster (E), Leader (E), Apprentice (E), College Student (E), Friend (E), Colleague (E), Supervisor (E), Assistant (E), Skillful One (E), Confident One (E), Introvert (C), Loner (C), Isolated One (C), Serious One (C), Tenacious One (C), Rigid One (C), Proud One (C), Novice (C), Advocate (C), Collaborator (C), Messenger (C), Comedienne (C), Guide (C), Community Member (C), Flexible One (C), Steadfast One (C)

Table 1: Etana's role repertoire.

Etana is a 22-year-old African American woman from New York City. She began her journey at TAP by attending a NeON group in the winter of 2018. She participated in the group on a consistent weekly basis for roughly three months. Etana arrived with a talent for illustration but no formal artistic training, higher educational experience nor any prior experience with 3D software (Artist, Novice). She presented as focused, hard-working and introverted; her demeanour was serious and she had limited interpersonal skills. Etana's interaction with the other participants in the group was infrequent and never self-initiated. She often worked quietly and alone (Introvert, Loner, Hard Worker).

Due to Etana's dedication, reliability and swift technical growth on the 3D software, she was invited to join the internship program in early spring 2018, when TAP had just partnered with the Fashion Institute of Technology to offer storyboarding and coding for animation courses for TAP interns. Etana was selected to enrol in both courses. This was Etana's first college experience and contributed to the development of her independent, social and professional skills. From learning how to register a Student ID card, to finding the library and navigating the college campus currency system, TAP supported Etana in discovering how to occupy a new space and role (College Student) and receive critical feedback from professionals, professors and peers outside the TAP community (Professional).

Etana's interpersonal skills blossomed at FIT. She was invigorated by the structured social and learning environment, evidenced by her taking the initiative to socialize with her peers in the campus courtyard in between and after classes (Friend, Comedienne), marking a shift from her initial presentation (Loner, Serious One).

Several months later, Etana was accepted into TAP's fall intern cohort. At the start of the semester, Etana struggled with patience both in terms of her own progress as well as with her peers. Along with Etana's drive and persistence came a fixed attachment to certain projects or ideas and difficulty accepting suggestions from others (Perfectionist, Stubborn One). The drama therapist worked with Etana to increase her flexibility, accept mistakes and soften in response to the ideas of others through structured group interventions (including exploration of past, present and future roles) and individual support. Etana was receptive to this process while always remaining guarded and private (Protected One). She did not wish to disclose her name or the origins of her nickname, 'E.J.', which emerged during her internship at TAP and which she announced she would like to exclusively be called (Unusual One).

In private conversation with the team, Etana was less guarded. She revealed she found it challenging to figure out how to navigate her identity as an African American woman seeking entry into a White, male-dominated industry. It is worth noting that Etana was not alone in her group; seven out of twelve members of her cohort were female-identifying. Six out of seven were women of colour. That she felt more comfortable exploring her identity with staff members only was notable. Over time, she revealed that her ambitious nature initially kept her from opening up with her colleagues, whom she saw as competition (Outsider, Protected One, Competitor).

When it came time for Etana to pitch her idea for an individual 3D project to the rest of the group, her proposal was complicated, unfocused and a divergence from her biggest strength as a 3D modeller, which is her ability to model detailed inanimate structures. Etana's peers and 3D instructor recommended that she create a piece that would showcase her strongest skillset. At first, Etana resisted the feedback, all the while seeming not entirely confident in the plan herself. She was unclear of the direction she was going to take and unfamiliar with the set of skills that would be needed to get her there yet reluctant to let the idea go (Stubborn One, Fighter, Proud One).

In both group and individual sessions, the drama therapist used this instance to highlight the importance of creative flexibility and realistic goal setting. After having time to incorporate interventions and digest the feedback, Etana returned for the second round of pitches with a revised plan: to create a 3D model of the bathhouse from one of her favourite animated films, *Spirited Away*.

Etana arrived at the follow-up pitch meeting with clear reference images, a solid plan of execution and a feeling of inspiration to complete this project. Etana's bathhouse model became one of the most prominent pieces in her digital portfolio, helping secure her an internship position at a professional studio just three months later (Skillful One, Competitor).

When Etana started as a TAP intern, she was fiercely passionate about advancing her career in 3D and leapt at the opportunity to make contact with professionals in the field (Brave One, Tenacious One). Upon meeting these professionals, however, Etana often lacked the tact and finesse that are integral to the skill of professional networking. Her common approach involved walking up
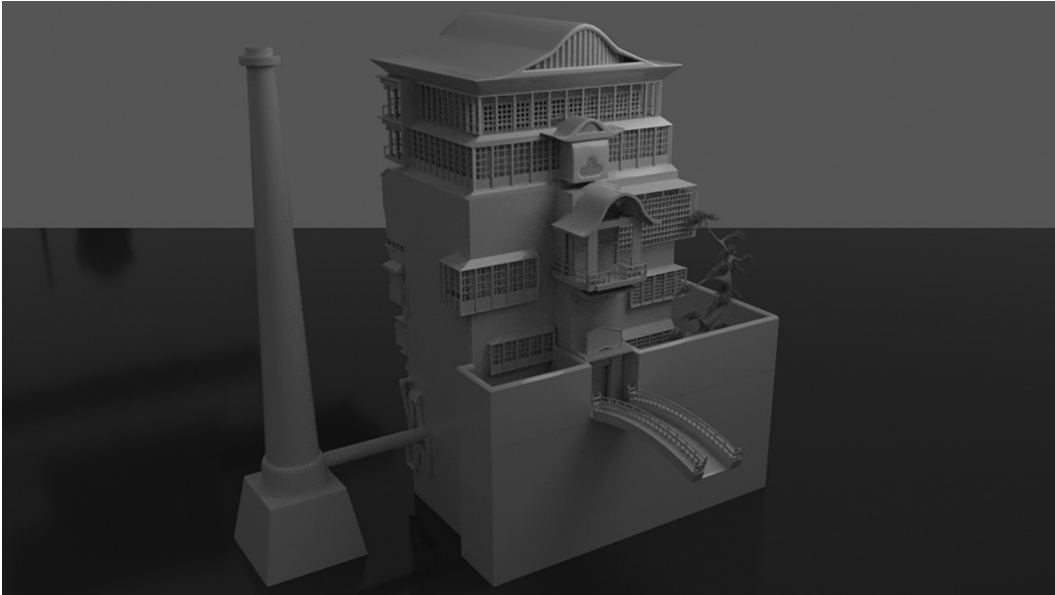
Figure 5: Etana's 3D model of the bathhouse from the animated film Spirited Away.

to a speaker or presenter, sometimes interrupting an already existing conversation, introducing herself, and asking '[c]an I have your contact info?' followed by an abrupt '[t]hank you' and walking away (Novice, Serious One, Unusual One). Through therapeutic interventions from the drama therapist and TAP support team, Etana was able to recognize her discomfort with the role of Professional Networker and began to untangle how her race and gender intersected with the role (Outsider). Etana fully engaged in role plays, mock interviews, conversations with direct feedback and engaged in social modelling to work through the discomfort in real world scenarios: she attended every guest lecture and volunteered to speak at TAP events, eventually softening her approach and becoming more comfortable presenting herself with confidence and ease (Persistent One, Confident One, Skillful One, Professional, Competitor).

After graduating the intern program, Etana was asked to serve as 3D modelling assistant in the subsequent intern cohort. Through this experience, Etana further developed her interpersonal skills and ability to deliver feedback in a supportive and constructive way. She also refined her leadership skills, discovering herself as a role model for others who aspired to one day be in her position (Guide, Teacher). Etana explored the challenges that came with the role of intern group assistant, such as her impatience with the interns' varying learning paces. During supportive meetings with the drama therapist, she initiated conversations about her challenges with patience with the self-stated goal of being more effective in her role as assistant (Professional). This process suggested a shift in Etana's development as a growing professional and marked the invocation of an internalized therapist role.

In April 2019, Etana was offered a four-month professional internship with a renowned, international animation and visual effects studio with a large New York City office. She shadowed professional 3D modellers, learned new techniques and built relationships with top tier digital artists (Artist, Modeller, Skillful One, Professional Networker). During her tenure at the studio, Etana

maintained her position as an apprentice and assistant in the TAP intern program. The concurrent positions offered her the opportunity to practise her recently strengthened professional persona and technical skills both within the supportive environment of TAP and a high-stakes, competitive workplace with unique dynamics, expectations, a new company culture and standards (Apprentice, Professional, Colleague).

Etana continues to build her professional persona with an increasing amount of agency and confidence in her abilities. Keeping in line with role theory, her presenting roles were not extinguished but transformed and expanded along the way. From Fighter has emerged Persistent One; Stubborn One shifted towards Confident One and Steadfast One; From Outsider and Isolated One arose Advocate and Collaborator. The TAP therapeutic workforce development model has allowed Etana the unique opportunity to take risks, make and learn from mistakes and navigate through a structured continuum of therapeutic support to become her own guide on a path towards her future.

DISCUSSION

Dean et al. (2019) have articulated how TAP's framework includes how our participants come to us whole; they do not need to be 'fixed'. This aligns directly with role theory's tenet that no role needs to be expunged; rather, expansion and balance of the role repertoire is the goal (Landy 1993, 2008). Balancing a wide range of roles allows one to move more freely between them and call up roles that will best suit the situation and moment. When the environment that the client is training to enter is a specifically professional one, the drama therapist must consider the cultural standards of professionalism in the workforce and the client's inherently strength-based roles. The process becomes one in which roles are untangled in terms of how appropriate they are to presenting and successfully navigating professional environments. In the structured and supportive TAP environment, participants are welcomed as themselves and not expected to change who they are. Their roles are celebrated and simultaneously explored in terms of how well they will achieve success in a professional atmosphere. Out of this process, both new roles and healthier interpretations of already existing roles emerge. Drawing upon the social modelling aspect of role theory (Landy 1993, 2008), participants then take the roles they have explored out into the world, effectively modelling them in the workplace.

Etana arrived at TAP whole. She had an intact repertoire of roles that had carried her through to the point at which she entered our program. Some roles had served her well (Artist, Fighter, Brave One) to get her to TAP. The very same roles (Fighter) and others (Loner, Isolated One, Rigid One) were restrictive and limited her ability to flourish professionally. The therapeutic goal was never to eliminate restrictive roles or prescribe Etana a set definition of a professional role. Rather, the goal was to allow Etana to discover more flexibility between roles (Student, Leader, Colleague, Confident One) and expand her own and others' interpretation of the roles and their manifestations in both therapeutic and workforce settings.

Exploring roles in terms of their quality and function allowed Etana to identify a version of professional that works for her while also honouring her internalized guide. For example, The Persistent One was born out of The Fighter. Through drama therapeutic intervention, Etana was given the opportunity to slow down and consider which role would be most beneficial to move her towards her future goals. This articulates a shift from invoking a role from

a survival mentality to a thriving mentality. In slowing down she was able to identify how some roles (Isolated One) were not helping her reach her goals and consider how they could coexist with new roles that could (Collaborator). After identifying and exploring these roles, Etana was able to model them in real world professional environments, helping her to secure her internship at a prominent animation studio (Insider).

This case illustration suggests that role theory and method in practice can support the psychological growth and cognitive framework in a person's professional development. In Etana's example, considering the already established strength-based roles in her repertoire and intentionally developing them alongside newly identified roles strengthened her ability to form rapport in the professional arena with confidence and finesse. Her example suggests that behind the scenes therapeutic role exploration supported her successfully securing gainful employment in the animation industry.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

As technology continues to play a prominent role in the workforce, there is a danger of people being put more at risk when opportunities to learn and stay current in technological developments are lacking. While coding skills are being more frequently offered in schools and other learning programs, the focus is primarily skill-based and often does not nourish the emerging artist and storyteller. Drama therapy offers space for people to intentionally identify and explore roles in the therapeutic space that can support them in more daunting, real-life situations like job interviews and high-pressure workplaces.

At TAP, we invite people to discover and build meaningful, creative, technical and expressive skills in a group process that leads to their personal and professional development. We intentionally offer our program to communities and individuals who cannot easily obtain such services or professional opportunities to support young people in becoming confident and secure enough to enter new spaces and know they are worthy of occupying them. With good technical skills, a nurtured artistic self and secure emotional well-being, we believe that our interns and apprentices are prepared to successfully enter the animation workforce.

The case illustration explored herein represents the experience of one young person at TAP. Qualitative and quantitative research is needed to further explore the efficacy of therapeutic workforce development. TAP recently completed a one-year program impact evaluation in our school groups and plans to publish those outcomes; we are particularly interested in how the concept of therapeutic workforce development can help us explore what it means to relate collaboratively with another person, as the initial results of the study indicate an increase in participant's sense of teamwork and social support. Future studies might expand the scope of this article by presenting additional case examples or examining how a cohort as a whole progresses through technical training. As our experience has shown that drama therapy is key in supporting put-at-risk youth in their technical and workforce training, areas for future consideration may include examining how drama therapy can be used in tandem with emerging technologies to further professional development.

When people have the required technical *and* relational skills for a job, they have the ability to transform the room where stories are being pitched, characters are being designed and talent is being chosen. In order for the future of storytelling in animation to include different stories and voices, the people with these stories and voices need to be in the room. Drama therapy interventions

can support young people in developing: the skills needed to get in the door; a finessed professional persona that can get them hired; and an internalized guide to help them thrive and bring their diverse stories onto our screens and into the behind the scenes environments that cast, tell and bring those stories to life.

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