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A Green Moment to Share: A Theatrical Laboratory to Explore Climate Crisis Possibilities within Single Moments

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Abstract: Many youth experience distress around the climate crisis. However, mainstream environmental messages ignore youth concerns, blame individuals, and suggest techno-fixes rather than addressing root causes. Young people need a way to productively process and collectively engage with their complex feelings about the climate crisis. During the spring of 2023, a group of university students facilitated a Research-based Theatre project to explore their relationship to climate and environmental justice as part of a biannual performance festival of student new work. Specifically, we used Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to slow down and embody participants' struggles with environmental action. We argue that this process allowed participants to explore how and why they made sense of mainstream environmental messaging about the climate crisis. This paper offers a case study exploring how the interwoven themes of power, positionality, and agency emerged through embodied investigations during the early development of our Research-based Theatre performance. The paper concludes by discussing how Research-based Theatre can embrace a post-activist lens that supports the complexity of sense-making and troubles the over-emphasis on solution as the only response to environmental/climate crisis. Further, we argue for the kin-making possibilities that crisis can teach us when engaged through embodied exploration.

Keywords: climate crisis; climate emotions; research-based theatre; theatre of the oppressed; embodiment

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1. Introduction

The entanglement of culture, well-being, and aspiration creates complexity and anxiety for young people and their relationship with the climate crisis (Hickman et al. 2021). Further, mainstream environmental narratives about environmental justice often ignore young people's voices and rely on buzzwords (e.g., recycling), blame the individual (e.g., plastic straws), or propose solutions that exclude vulnerable communities (e.g., technofixes). The media commonly frames environmental change in scientific terms (Dryzek et al. 2011). Current solutions overemphasize technological fixes, which may obstruct the pursuit of climate change solutions that are more effective and socially just (Moser and Dilling 2007). Recent research on arts-based environmental justice methods argues for youth-led practices that engage vulnerability, listening, world-building, and the body as a site for making meaning and imagining possible environmental futures (Gallagher et al. 2022).

During spring 2023, a group of fifteen undergraduate and graduate students at a large, public, research-intensive university in the southwestern United States participated in a semester-long, Research-based Theatre project to explore and consider university students' relationship to the climate crisis called *A Green Moment to Share*. Through a case study examination of rehearsal moments and pre-/post-performance ensemble surveys, we explore how the embodied creation of *A Green Moment to Share* offered a productive method

for university students' individual and collective conceptualization of environmental justice. Specifically, our study asks: *What do the embodied aspects of Theatre of the Oppressed strategies reveal about the factors that shape participants' relationship to and experience of the climate crisis?*

We begin with an introduction to relevant theory from climate science and communication, embodiment, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Research-based Theatre, which shaped the development of our project. We follow with an introduction to our project structures and research methods. We then analyze a portion of our data extracted from our early rehearsal process, followed by a brief discussion of three key themes that emerged from our narrative analysis. Here, we consider how and why specific embodied theatre strategies (e.g., image work) made visible participants' understanding of how *power, positionality*, and *agency* shaped their relationship to the climate crisis. We conclude by connecting our emergent findings with the productive ways Research-based Theatre can uncover sources of possibility within structures of oppression.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Climate Crisis, Social Justice, and Emotions

The climate crisis is a significant issue generating intense anxiety and feelings of powerlessness, particularly among youth (Lawrance et al. 2022; Ray 2020). However, the assumption that more information or inciting fear leads to attitudinal and behavioral change hinders the effectiveness of climate change conversations (Dryzek et al. 2011). While science is crucial to understanding the climate crisis, an exclusive focus on scientific and technological solutions may overlook vital social and ethical aspects of this crisis. Specifically, an over-reliance on scientific and technological solutions may obstruct effective and socially just climate change solutions. It may also result in a missed opportunity to interrogate the cultural forces behind climate change.

Arts-based approaches allow for reaching beyond techno-fixes to approaches based on "soft technology" (e.g., those based on "non-scientific" knowledge) (Jin 2013). Policies around climate change often focus on "effectiveness" without considering social justice and ethics (Baird 2008). Integrating arts and humanities invites aesthetic, humanistic, and non-scientific perspectives into policymaking that may help decision-makers understand how historical and cultural contexts affect policy options (Moser and Dilling 2007). Therefore, we adopt a multifaceted approach to climate change that centers embodied performance to expand sources of knowledge and complicate ways of knowing.

Climate anxiety, which may be a symptom of privileged groups waking up to the existential threat, can operate like white fragility, centering the needs of the dominant group and ensuring resources are made available to them at the expense of others (DiAngelo 2018; Ray 2021). Instead of seeking to bypass these emotions, it may be more beneficial to explore and practice relationality through the frameworks of Othering and belonging (Powell 2012), to increase individual and collective resilience in relationship to the climate crisis. Relationality theory connects to theories of healing-centered learning and somatic therapies, which emphasize that our bodies hold the traumas of white supremacy and ecological existential threat (Ginwright 2019; Menakem 2021). Therefore, a body-centered understanding of trauma is essential to how individuals can find a productive, relationality-focused response to climate change.

2.2. Embodied Knowledge

Traditional Western education and research privileges the mind over the body. Moreover, when research includes the body, it is rarely positioned as the focus of data collection, analysis, or representation. However, many critical movements (e.g., Black feminism) have returned to the body as a place of knowing to criticize oppressive systems (Collins 2002; hooks 2014). Indigenous ways of knowing center the ways that knowledge arrives through tradition, through empirical experiences of the environment, and through dreams and intuition (Castellano 2000). Theories of embodied cognition suggest that our encounters with the world happen through our bodies (our senses, our emotions, and our imagina-

tions) (Paul 2021). Past work on embodied cognition points to the role it plays in learning (Hrach 2021; Mualem et al. 2018), personal understanding (Paul 2021), and individual capacity to navigate uncertain futures (Zola 1991). Drama and theatre strategies can activate embodied cognition. Previous research suggests that movement, improvisation, and roleplay contribute to individual and collective meaning-making (Dawson 2018). Because the primary approaches to climate change have been heavily cognitive, we are curious about engaging with climate change using theatre. We wonder if particular forms of theatre might help us research the knowledge in our bodies and emotions, with attention toward embodied cognition in alignment with Indigenous ways of knowing, as a form of sense-making regarding the climate crisis.

2.3. Theatre of the Oppressed and Climate Change

Theatre of the Oppressed, an applied theatre practice created by Augusto Boal for community organizing under Brazilian dictatorship, draws upon theories developed by critical pedagogue Paulo Freire (1994) to create interactive, community-based theatre for social change (Boal 1992). At the heart of Theatre of the Oppressed is a critical view into a community's struggles and an invitation to the audience to actively join as "spect-actors" in interactive problem-solving. In Theatre of the Oppressed's image theatre, participants use their and their collaborator's bodies to sculpt images representing their oppression and dreams for the future (Boal 1992). These frozen images are then animated to explore oppression and how to disrupt it. Animating the images involves dynamizing frozen tableaux to explore character desires, relationships, and actions (Boal 1992). Variations of image theatre, known as Rainbow of Desire and Cops in the Head, investigate the psychological dimensions of oppression (e.g., internalized voices of the oppression) (Boal 1995).

Working in embodied images or interactively working through a problem of oppression allows participants to explore current oppression structures and imagine and enact liberation (Greene 2000). This creative, embodied work can be a productive step towards transforming our world; rather than simply inverting hierarchies of oppression, exploring embodied images invites individuals to consider multiple ways of being and knowing.

Specifically, Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) methods can be used to imagine and rehearse affective and embodied transformations related to climate change issues. Its rich capacity for multimodal story generation can help theatre makers and their audiences explore their emotions and sit with the uncertainty needed to confront and adapt to the climate crisis. Our research and practice are influenced by the work of David Diamond's *Theatre for Living* (Diamond 2007), whose adaptation of TO work resists simplistic binaries of oppressed/oppressor and adds complexity to portrayals of "villains" within imagined embodied scenarios. Diamond's TO approach was especially crucial to our work within this project because our participants often struggled to reconcile the privileged and marginalized elements of their intersectional identities, in our work.

Theatre of the Oppressed potentially scaffolds moments of transformative learning. Transformative learning theory invites "disorienting dilemmas" that allow learners to become unsettled about taken-for-granted assumptions or perspectives they hold (Mezirow and Taylor 2009). Embodied performance allows participants to transform self and world through their senses, emotions, and physicality (Freire 1994; Maiese 2017).

2.4. Research-Based Theatre

Research-based Theatre is an umbrella term for various approaches to integrating theatre and academic research. This collaborative, relational, and embodied methodology (Shigematsu et al. 2022) offers a method for simultaneously gathering, analyzing, and disseminating data. The affordances of Research-based Theatre mean that it can "create three-dimensional (re)presentations of research that move in space and time" (Lea and Belliveau 2020, p. 1) and Research-based Theatre shows rather than tells, bringing research data to life.

Research-based Theatre is especially well-suited to showcasing diverse and marginalized voices, for community-engaged research, and for broadly disseminating research. It allows for multiple perspectives and methodological pluralism in which each methodology provides unique insights into what is being studied (Barone and Eisner 2011). Past work on Research-based Theatre suggests its potential to transform relationships and for relationships to transform them. Importantly for our work, it allows for complicating binaries and flattened narratives, which was central to how we hoped to re-story our relationship to the climate crisis and to support our audiences to do the same.

Lea and Belliveau (2020) argue for the value of a collective approach to Research-based Theatre. Our team employed a collective, iterative, Research-based Theatre structure for our project, *A Green Moment to Share* (AGMTS). In phase one, our performance ensemble spent weeks using embodied drama and Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) techniques to research our own experiences. Specifically, we used theatrical methods and forms to surface, complicate, and reflexively consider how and why we make sense of climate change. Eventually, we devised a 90 min interactive theatre performance—based on our own embodied theatrical research process—to support audiences in making sense of their feelings about climate anxiety. Alison Oddey (1994) describes devising as "a process of making theatre that enables a group of performers to be physically and practically creative in the sharing and shaping of an original [performance] product" (1). In phase two, we premiered our devised work at our university's bi-annual New Works Theatre Festival.

The case study shared in this paper explores the first phase of our project. Next, we introduce the participant context for our work, the specific drama-based methods and data, our analysis process, emergent themes, and a discussion of our preliminary data analysis from phase one of our project.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The *A Green Moment to Share* (*AGMTS)* Research-based Theatre project was led by a Ph.D. science communication graduate student in partnership with a team of five undergraduate, four graduate students, and a faculty advisor, all of whom were associated with a large, public university in the southwest United States. Nine additional undergraduate students from various majors and intersectional identities were recruited into the project through digital flyers distributed through campus listservs and newsletters.

Participants were distributed across a wide variety of majors, including public relations, theatre and dance, political communications, psychology, business, piano performance, biochemistry, architecture, and sustainability studies. Participants also came from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Vietnamese, European, Indian, East Asian, Mexican, and Afro-European. Despite the variety of majors and intersectional identities of participants, they all were drawn to the project because of the connection of the climate crisis to their future careers and communities. A local eco-anxiety therapist was also hired onto the leadership team and was present at every other rehearsal and all performances.

The study included two phases: phase one (the experience of participants making the *AGMTS*) and phase two (the audience's experience of an *AGMTS* performance). Our research study was reviewed and approved by the university's IRB team (Study: 00000017-MOD04). Rehearsals for *AGMTS* occurred weekly in three-hour blocks from January to April 2023, skipping academic break weeks. Three public performances occurred in April 2023 as a part of the Cohen New Works Festival on the university campus.

3.2. Development of a Research-Based Theatre Project

Each Research-based Theatre project workshop session (see Table 1) featured a series of Theatre of the Oppressed strategies. We began with a check-in ritual and a group game followed by a focused sequence of TO activities. We concluded with a reflective discussion on our experience and a short closing activity. Over time, the cast explored a range of

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) formats, including image theatre, Rainbow of Desire, and Cops in the Head[1].

Table 1. Workshop sequence.

Week	Subject	Objective
1	Focus group	Collect participant experiences
2	Image work	Explore moments with images
3	Image work	Explore moments with images
4	Rainbow of Desire	Explore fears and desires
5	Cops in the Head	Explore internal voices of oppression
6	Improvisation practice	Gain improvisation skills
7	Playbuilding	Devise final performance
8	Playbuilding	Devise final performance
9	Playbuilding	Devise final performance
10	Focus group	Collect participant experiences

3.3. Determining the Case Study Boundaries through Thematic Analysis

Data were collected across phase one (development) and phase two (performance) of the *AGMTS* Research-based Theatre project, including pre- and post-focus group interviews, pre- and post-surveys, rehearsal notes, as well as photos and videos of the development process and performances. After reviewing the complete data set, the authors opted to focus on data from the phase one (development) process. We used adapted narrative inquiry (Zatzman 2006) to examine and trace the stories and insights into our social world generated through our Research-based Theatre process. We triangulated across our phase one data sources focused on each rehearsal week, to surface shared themes about how embodied strategies revealed participants' embodied sense and meaning-making about the climate crisis. After discussing and comparing notes on all analyses, the authors identified three themes: power, positionality, and agency. The authors then reviewed the data using amplitude coding (Saldaña and Omasta 2016), focusing on the selected three themes. Based on this final round of coding, Rehearsal Two (see Table 1) was selected as the bounded case study because the themes of power, positionality, and agency had the highest prevalence and were the most interactive. Rehearsal Two's data also served as a representative example of participant experience during phase one (rehearsal).

Across our analysis process, we found ourselves fluidly discovering narratives of intersectional experience rather than labeled solutions to climate change (Perry and Medina 2011). Further, to establish what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call "trustworthiness" in our findings, we made use of multiple sources, methods, researchers, and theories to corroborate the findings that follow (Creswell and Poth 2016).

3.4. Rehearsal Two Case Study: Exploring How the Body Encounters the Climate Crisis through Image Theatre

The second rehearsal in our development of *A Green Moment to Share* began with a participant check-in and an introduction to the tenets of TO. This rehearsal aimed to introduce and familiarize the participants with Augusto Boal's (1992) image theatre. We used two Boal exercises to warm up. The first was *Pushing*, where two participants placed their hands on each other's shoulders and pushed each other until they found a balance in strength. The second exercise was Hypnosis, where one person in a pair of participants holds their hand in front of the other's face and moves their hand while the partner follows. The leader and follower switched at the facilitator's signal and repeated the exercise. The purpose of our opening exercises was to invite participants to "demechanize" by moving their bodies into positions they would not normally get into, to make physical connection, and to challenge them (Boal 1992; Diamond 2007). Both warm-ups were followed by a reflection to discuss participants' experience of the exercise and to consider if and how the activity related to their experience with the climate crisis.

Next, the rehearsal moved into image work. First, we used the Boal strategy Complete the Image. In this activity, one person steps into the center of the circle and moves their body into a frozen shape. Then, another participant joins the first and offers another frozen image to complete the image. Then, a third participant "taps out" one of the two frozen participants to make a new two-person image with the remaining person. The cycle continues forward. In our rehearsal, the ensemble made a series of open (non-thematic) paired images using this practice until the facilitator announced that the images should now explore our struggles with the climate crisis.

In our final round of Complete the Image, the facilitator invited additional participants who wished to join the image to do so, one at a time. Our shared image expanded to include multiple participants. Then, the facilitator had participants "freeze" and asked the group to hold the final image. With this image in place, the facilitator activated the image through an Internal Monologue technique. The facilitator invited participants to consider how a character in their physical position might feel. The facilitator asked all participants in the image to simultaneously speak the internal feelings of their characters through an improvised monologue. Then, the facilitator asked each performer to synthesize their character's thoughts by sharing an "I want _____" statement one at a time.

In the second half of the rehearsal, the participants split into small groups to make new frozen images (tableaux) of a moment of struggle concerning the climate crisis. Each person created a "moment of struggle" frozen image with their group members, placing themselves in their image. As the groups worked to build their series of images, the person designing the image was advised to use minimal language. The focus on body position helped keep the final "moment of struggle" image open for others to place their story and meaning onto the tableaux. Groups then shared their "moment of struggle" image series, and everyone voted on which "moment" resonated most with them. Finally, from each group's selected image, one final image (Figure 1) was chosen from all groups as the "moment of struggle" that held the most resonance for the group. This image served as our focus for the remainder of the session.

Figure 1. Image from rehearsal of Week 2 (from left to right, Cast Members 7, 1, and 4).

The final portion of the rehearsal was spent animating and exploring each selected "moment of struggle" image. The Internal Monologue technique was again used to establish motivation for each character in the image. Once each character's "wants" were stated, the facilitator invited the audience to stand with (and take on the same physical shape as) the character with whom they felt they most understood. Through this Stand with a Character technique, participants noted which characters they were most collectively drawn to in their generated "moment of struggle" concerning the climate crisis.

This exploration strategy used aspects of Boal's Real and Ideal image activity. One of the final two "moment of struggle" images was selected. The facilitator then invited an audience member to re-make or resculpt the "Real" moment of struggle with the climate crisis to imagine an "Ideal" solution. A participant re-sculpted the struggle image into an image in which they believed the characters had achieved a more healthy community. The participants embodying the characters were then asked to remember this Ideal image and to notice their thoughts and feelings while holding it. The facilitator then asked them to return to the original image. The facilitator told the participants that they would clap their hands six times. On each handclap, the characters can move a step at a time. The characters' objective was to get from the Real Image to the Ideal Image while remaining true to their character. Reflections and an exchange of insights followed this Ideal Image animation. The rehearsal concluded with a closing circle to hold space for lingering thoughts and impressions.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Exploring Embodied Moments of Struggle with the Climate Crisis

Through our research analysis, we considered how each embodied image theatre activity in rehearsal two supported our performance ensemble to explore and make sense of significant factors that shape their experience of the climate crisis. In doing so, we acknowledge that movement is its own language and exceeds current ways of knowing. Every "body" has a story that is inherently interwoven with other stories. In this section, we will focus on meaning-making which occurred in relationship to the construction of our final "moment of struggle" image (Figure 1), with particular attention to how the themes of power, positionality, and agency were entangled across embodied meaning-making.

4.2. Exploring Power in the Climate Crisis

Figure 1 shows one participant's image of their struggle with the climate crisis. In this image, Cast Member 7 stands with their arms crossed and their gaze pointed down at Cast Member 1, on the floor supported by their arms. Cast Member 1 is gazing up at Cast Member 4, who—like Cast Member 7—is standing with their arms crossed and gazing down at Cast Member 1. Image theatre allowed us to slow down and remain in a single moment. The discussion of these embodied moments of struggle allowed meaning to be generated and shared among participants. Through these discussions, participants co-constructed meaning about their experiences with the climate crisis. In rehearsal, when participants were asked to describe this image, they shared that they thought the different levels of the people in this image symbolized the various amounts of power each character held. This opened up a dialogue about our definitions of power and how different characters used it in the scene. For example, a participant noted that Cast Member 1, positioned on the floor, represented the character with the least power. Another participant described how the two standing (and therefore more powerful) characters gazed directly at the character with the least power on the floor. Someone noted that the floor character was also using their arms to prop themselves up, and the two characters with the most power held their arms folded before their bodies in a protective position. Participants made sense of these offers by suggesting that perhaps these characters were unwilling to connect with or help the character with less power. Eventually, the facilitator asked where in everyday life we might see this sort of power level differentiation. A participant

suggested that the image might represent a boss–employee relationship. Specifically, they noted how a boss can "push" down on the employee as part of a power hierarchy.

Next, the ensemble used the "internal monologue" exercise to develop further motivation for each character by simultaneously improvising and speaking dialogue from the character's point of view. Through this activity, the group noticed that a character's power level seemed to correspond to the volume of their speech. Characters with more power were louder, often drowning out the voices of the less powerful. When prompted, the group connected this observation to their experience of the climate crisis by commenting on how more powerful voices are often heard more "loudly" in the media compared to marginalized voices.

Near the end of the rehearsal, when a participant re-sculpted the image in Figure 1 into an "Ideal" solution, they resculpted the standing character on the right, positioning them to help the person on the ground. However, when the facilitator asked participants to move a step at a time from the original image to the "Ideal" image while remaining true to their characters, the character standing on the right held out their hands to the person in the middle of the floor but then took them away.

When debriefing about this exercise later, the participant playing the character explained that this offer (and taking away) of help represented the character's internal tensions. In their mind, the character really wanted to help the character on the floor, but their supervisor did not want them to. Other participants in the group connected this to how we often feel stuck in the face of the climate crisis; we want to help but feel stuck in our usual "roles". We discussed how those with power over us (like the "boss" character in the image) often affect our behavior, causing us to act against our values.

As we continued, another participant offered a different way to make meaning of this moment. They noted that the more powerful character's offer may have affected the character on the floor in essential ways we do not yet see. This participant's meaning-making introduced a new dialogue that complicated participants' understanding of change--sometimes, change takes time. Another person built on this idea noting that there may be cascading waves of change after still moments of connection between people.

Next, the facilitator introduced the "Stand with a Character" image animation. Audience members began to stand with (and take on the same shape) the character they best understood. Participants moved and then noted that their view of the scene depended on their character's particular position. One participant joined the (middle) character on the floor. They explained that they took this position because they had moved from a tiny town to the larger city the university was in, and they often felt "ignorant" and "uncultured" compared to students from the city. They explained that they felt paralyzed because they did not feel they had the knowledge to act in relation to the climate crisis. However, the more powerful (standing) characters explained that they felt stuck for similar reasons. This led to a discussion of how the limited perspectives of our particular positionalities can keep us stuck or enable us to cause harm. Participants connected this to how literal, physical position in space held metaphorical and cultural implications in our image theatre work.

4.3. Exploring Positionality in the Climate Crisis

Participants also noticed that their position dictated their relationship to the situation. The "boss character" (left in Figure 1) was situated at a higher position, and the "employee character" (right) was lower than them, but higher than the character on the floor (middle). The levels of the image were felt by the audience participants, as well. They perceived frustration and helplessness from the character on the floor reaching for help while the characters in "higher positions" only judged and watched.

In a later part of the exercise, participants discovered that by making minor postural adjustments, they could attain a different perspective. When asked what this might symbolize, participants shared that these postural shifts might represent listening to another's story or gaining empathy for another's positionality. By zooming out and viewing the image from multiple angles, participants suggested that the character may not need to

know everything—instead, they could reach for one another. By slowing down in a single moment, they made meaning about how shifts might come from being in a relationship with others, not just from gaining knowledge.

When reflecting on this experience after, participants discussed how the characters' limited perspectives reminded them of how our particular identities afford us more (or less) perspective on the climate crisis. Participants also noted that none of the characters moved because they felt paralyzed by analysis or "stuckness". They then began to question the need for a perfect intellectual understanding before acting on the climate crisis. By physicalizing the scene, participants brought up how privilege and power operated in this moment. Participants continued to build on these insights as they began to explore "better" potential interventions to shift the struggles portrayed in the image for those with the least amount of power.

Similarly, when resculpting the image in Figure 1 to their "Ideal", an audience participant (Cast Member 5) did not shift the characters' positions but rather connected the characters. Rather than change the characters' level (power) or view (positionality), the audience member changed their relationality. While this was not a significant distance to move, the participants playing the characters shared that they still had not reached this "Ideal" position because they were trapped in oppressive structures. The character to the right did not maintain contact with the character on the floor because they feared losing their position. After all, the "boss" character was watching them. During reflection, participants' meaning-making connected this scene to how current systems keep us from connecting, stifling action on the climate crisis.

The exercises also helped to reveal the power structures that shaped the individual and collective experience and to interrogate assumptions around what is perceived as "ideal" or "better". For example, the facilitator asked the participants, "Why did the standing characters not join the character on the floor?" This led to an animated discussion about joining the character on the floor and a generative conversation about imagining different types of relations than the hierarchical ones on view. Standpoint Theory argues that the "view from below" is a benefit, because it provides a necessary perspective to see the terrain of oppressive structures and actions (Collins 2002; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

4.4. Exploring Agency in the Climate Crisis

In our project, imagining the "view from below" also enabled participants to begin to reconceptualize their own agency within the climate crisis. In early "readings" of the images, participants saw characters at lower positions as helpless and vulnerable to the other characters' choices. Characters on higher levels (with higher power) gazed at, reached down towards, and acted upon characters at lower levels. When characters in their images did not have power, participants felt they did not have agency. However, as participants placed themselves in the image, they began to physically embody the power and the perspectival limits of their position in space. By adjusting their bodies, they saw the possibilities of moving from the original to their "Ideal" images. By realistically assessing what their character could do within existing power systems, they made agentic discoveries even though their position was perceived to have less power or access. These discoveries led to productive conversations where participants began to contemplate what they wanted to prioritize based on the power they could possess if they made small adjustments to their position.

After physicalizing the scene, participants also noted that characters who were described as having low power actually retained some agency. For example, a participant noted that the character on the floor (Figure 1) did not stand up but still acted on the environment. The cast member portraying the character on the floor adding to this reflection when they explained they felt a change within when they clawed at the floor. They noted that while their agency remained limited by oppressive structures, they could still reach for possibilities, which felt powerful.

Participants also found it productive to explore the perspectives of the two standing characters gazing at the character on the floor. The initial interpretation of the standing characters was that they have more power and perhaps they were judging the character on the floor. Participants connected the standing characters to how those in power often blame individuals for circumstances resulting from structural oppression. This led to another discussion where participants began to rebuke the corporate narrative of sub-culpability for the climate crisis. A discussion followed in which participants shared stories of times the mainstream messages surrounding the climate crisis have left them feeling individually responsible.

4.5. Making Sense of Climate Crisis through Image Theatre

In sum, our analysis of rehearsal two and our embodied exploration of a "moment of struggle" revealed how the three overlapping themes–power, positionality, and agency—shape how we experience the climate crisis. These three themes illuminated a broader range of possibilities, allowing us to re-imagine our stuckness regarding environmental topics (Greene 2000). Slowing down to pause and interrogate a moment from multiple perspectives also allowed us to examine our experiences and feelings and to connect across different perspectives. Using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques as a Research-based Theatre method helped us excavate and understand how power, positionality, and agency shape our experience and relationship with the climate crisis. As we moved from phase one (rehearsal) into phase two (performance), we built on these discoveries. We began to understand the importance of embracing entanglement, bridging rather than breaking, and moving beyond an overreliance on solutions. We conclude with an exploration of these ideas along with further insights and wonders about the role of the body and arts as a method for healing within the climate crisis.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Thinking Forward

Throughout rehearsals for *A Green Moment to Share* and specifically within the rehearsal sequence we examined for this paper, we began to view the climate crisis through a spectrum of possibilities and postures. This expanded view allowed us to hold complexity. The frozen images helped us recognize our own entanglement and complicity in the current crisis, and to use our bodies-in-relationship as a starting point for ethical action (Shotwell 2016; Tsing 2015). Over time, we began to adopt Tallbear's (2014) concept of "standing with", not seeing ourselves separate from the systems we critique.

The embodiment and relationality of image theatre also provided an opportunity to examine where we bridge (and where we break) with others. Powell and Menendian (2016) define bridging as recognizing and breaking as denying shared humanity. Bridging across differences requires an open, spacious mindset that is often absent in the wider world (Hopthrow et al. 2017). Pausing and examining a single moment of our struggles with the climate crisis slowed us down and brought us into the present moment, into mindfulness. From this place of present-moment awareness, a more complex picture of others emerged, enabling bridging. In future research, we are curious to explore if and how we can translate these "pauses" to the world into action outside the rehearsal room.

Our collective Research-based Theatre project also involved a new orientation toward the climate crisis originating from the body. Rather than imposing solutions onto the climate crisis, theatre allowed us to embody the crisis with intellectual humility and uncertainty, allowing for emergent possibilities. Fugitive Studies scholar Akómálafé (2017) argues that the posture we take can be a performance of our realities, revealing and hiding possibilities from our view. Through embodied theatre, we found similar limitations and possibilities of our physical orientation towards moments of struggle with/in the climate crisis. Our work slowed down and troubled top-down climate solutions to allow for other intelligences and learnings to emerge. Releasing our grip on top-down climate solutions meant sitting with uncertainty. But with uncertainty came a larger capacity to hold our climate emotions

and the emergence of relationships. Drawing from Fugitive Studies, Akómálafé invites us to dance with the "cracks" and uncertainty when things become strange and break down (Harney and Moten 2013). In order to transform the world, we must be willing to get deliriously lost. Akómálafé (2017) proposes *post-activism* as a lens that troubles "solutions" to the climate crisis and invites us instead to be with the uncertainty, allowing for kin-making and emergence.

Sitting with our bewilderment meant sitting with ourselves as entire, flawed humans. In this, we learned to afford ourselves the same bridging that we afforded others. This meant learning to sit with discomfort. As Haraway (2016) suggests, we learned to "stay with the trouble".

Holding images of our struggles with the climate crisis also involved staying with our climate emotions (grief, frustration, despair, longing). We had to wait for what emerged rather than look to quickly "get over" our negative feelings. In doing so, we began to notice how our pursuit of answers often kept us from relating to one another and to the land. These forms of relating are not new—Indigenous scholars have been urging us to think relationally for a while (e.g., Kimmerer 2013).

Moving beyond the single rehearsal explored in this paper, our later rehearsals supported our understanding that our experience of the climate crisis often intersects with family, immigration, career, and friendship. Later portions of our process helped us also to explore the value of broad, cross-issue coalitions of climate action (Garza 2020). We hope our future research on this topic will expand this inquiry; we believe bridging—not breaking—with others is pivotal to climate change action.

5.2. Final Thoughts

While scientific methods often involve asking a question and seeking a solution, arts-based methods may open our senses to unnoticed questions. In this collective, Research-based Theatre project, we explored our relationship and struggles with the climate crisis through our bodies. Focusing on the body as a site of knowledge uncovered aspects of power, positionality, and agency. Participants and researchers often expressed a sense of relief after distinguishing their responsibilities from others during the embodied sensemaking exercises. In distinguishing responsibilities, we also formed boundaries and began to shed our individual pressure to shape our lives around the solutions described in most climate crisis messaging. Ultimately, our work suggests we might relate to ourselves, to one another, and to the climate crisis in new ways. By seeking insights—rather than solutions—we may encounter a new orientation for future imaginings, one that accepts radical responsibility, bridges across differences, and embraces uncertainty.

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Note

[1] Originally the plan had been to use Forum Theatre in the performance of *AGMTS*. In Forum Theatre actors perform short "problem" scenes and invite the audience to pause the action and advise or replace a character to rehearse possible solutions to an oppressive situation. However, through rehearsal the ensemble realized that the climate crisis was internal and psychological, which made it poorly suited to Forum Theatre as a performance method.

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