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**Storytelling and Telling Story:
Constructing Narrative and Performativity in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS)**

OPEN SCENES
Sample Encounter Exercise

DESCRIPTION: Open scenes are scenes that include dialogue, often mundane or natural in appearance, without punctuation. In performing arts-based disciplines, open scenes are used to explore characterization or how an actor might embody information in both voice and stature to convey given or chosen circumstances. In many ways, the process mimics discourse analysis—reading the choices in terms of physicality and voice to infer meaning.

Similarly, open scenes can be used in training peace practitioners to not only identify the modes of communication within the scene as an observer, but also actively engage in understanding the personal impulse to embody information.

Open scenes can be found in a variety of locations including through online search engines and a variety of performance-based texts (Spolin, 1986). Trainers might write their own scenes and, under certain conditions, the same might be true of the learner community.

MATERIALS:

- Open scene scripts
- Given circumstance samples (*optional*)
- Field journals
- Writing utensils
- Costumes (*optional—discouraged for exploratory work*)

DIRECTIONS:

- Find/craft an open scene.
- Assign roles to participants (generally 2 characters per scene).

EXPLORING PERFORMATIVITY	UTILIZING PERFORMATIVITY
Allow learners time to become comfortable with the text without any guidance.	Allow learners to rehearse the scene, creating characters and intertwining narratives. Optional: given circumstance samples may be used to assist learners. Suggest that they try a few versions with an eye toward finding ways to share information with observers.

Encourage volunteers to share their open scene.	Share scenes.
When scene is complete, open the space to observers for sharing around what was heard and how it was received: <i>What did you see?</i> <i>What did you learn?</i> <i>How did you learn it?</i>	Upon completion of scene, explore what information was gathered and how those conclusions were made. Encourage specific references.
For volunteer performers, discussion might be centered around: <i>How did it feel to be the center of attention?</i> <i>How did your emotions affect the choices you made?</i> <i>Did the observers get your message?</i>	For performers, after hearing the above information, ask that they return to the rehearsal process to refine their choices to reflect adjustments or enhance their choices.
Reflection (Guided or Independent): <i>What was the experience of being watched like? What was it like to watch others perform?</i> <i>Do the performers' relationships affect their interactions?</i> <i>How did you gather information about the sequence of events for each scene?</i>	Reflection (Independent): <i>Why did you make the choices you shared? What was their significance? Was that significance noticed by observers?</i> <i>How did it feel knowing observers understood your work? If they did not, how did that feel?</i> <i>What might you do different now?</i>

SAMPLE OPEN SCENE

A: Hello

B: Hi

A: How are you

B: Fine thank you

A: Don't you know what time it is

B: No I don't have a watch

SAMPLE OPTIONAL GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES:

Characters: Trainers might opt to give guidance on characters/relationships (e.g. parent/child; best friends; teacher/student; etc...)

Conflict-based: Information can be given around a conflict within the scene (e.g. you're late and your scene partner is moving slowly; you were waiting for this person; etc...)

Motivation-centered: Information can be provided using what characters want from each other or the interaction (e.g. you wish things were different; you know the other person knows; you forgot; you can't forgive; etc...)

VARIATIONS: Variations with an eye toward enhancing opportunities for learning are encouraged, particularly if learners are expanding the activity to become inclusive of more concepts and topics. It should always be remembered that the purpose of this exercise is to examine performativity—how information, be it more concrete as in knowing the relationships between two characters or leaning toward abstraction as in motivation-centered, affects the choices made in any situation.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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