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# Open dramatherapy: Embracing Open Science in the further development of our field

## ABSTRACT

*This issue of Dramatherapy (DJ) is its first published as Diamond Open Access, which promises to stimulate engagement and encourage further research in dramatherapy. It also connects our field to the progressively advancing Open Science revolution, which seeks to reduce barriers to research and support collaboration in and around academia. This brief commentary seeks to review Open Science practices within the field of dramatherapy and envisions how its community may benefit from further implementation of Open Science principles. It also notes some of the challenges of an Open Science approach. In closing, it names three recommendations for students, practitioners and researchers of dramatherapy that may facilitate approaches of Open Science within our field and promote scholarship and collaboration.*

## KEYWORDS

dramatherapy  
research  
open access  
open data  
collaboration  
transparency  
reproducibility

In 2015, Sajnani posed the question, 'What is our research culture and how might drama therapists create knowledge together?' (2015: 5). The years since have seen her question answered in multiple ways. In short, it can be concluded that an increasing number of authors are publishing an increasing number

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of articles in an increasing number of journals (Constien and Junker 2023). Consequently, our research culture is becoming progressively diverse (Korde et al. 2023). The year 2023 alone saw 55 articles (65 per cent co-authored) being published in 22 different journals from 122 authors from 14 countries (Constien and Junker 2024).

Moving the journal *Dramatherapy* into a Diamond Open Access journal, however, is also a decisive answer to Sajnani's query. Going forward, every article published in *Dramatherapy* will be available for free to all without any publication fees imposed on the authors or readers. Transforming this invaluable journal into a publicly and freely accessible resource promises to stimulate engagement and encourage further research in dramatherapy. Moreover, facilitating open access also positions *Dramatherapy* and the field of dramatherapy overall within the context of the rapidly advancing Open Science revolution.

Open Science promotes transparent, accessible and collaborative processes in and around research (Vicente-Saez and Martinez-Fuentes 2018). However, Open Science extends beyond a simple methodological approach (Fecher and Friesike 2014). Instead, it encompasses a broad sociocultural movement. It advocates for collaboration, fairness and justice, transforming the practices of science and academia overall (Ramachandran et al. 2021). As a critical or even 'disruptive phenomenon' (Vicente-Saez and Martinez-Fuentes 2018: 428), Open Science closely relates to a feminist perspective and social justice approach in emphasizing collaboration, questioning extant power structures and opening the field of research towards a more inclusive practice (Kruschick and Schoch 2023; Pownall et al. 2021).

This brief commentary seeks to outline and exemplify how the field of dramatherapy may benefit from an Open Science approach. However, it also notes some of the challenges such practices may pose. It closes with three simple recommendations on how to embrace Open Science and concludes with a positive view on the state and future of Open Science in dramatherapy.

## WHY OPEN SCIENCE?

Open Science is an umbrella term and encompasses multiple efforts and activities based on its core tenets of openness and connectivity (Fecher and Friesike 2014; Vicente-Saez et al. 2020). It includes not only practices such as pre-registration, Open Data or open peer review but also public engagement and knowledge transfer activities that challenge the traditional understanding and hierarchical power structure of research (Pownall et al. 2021; Ramachandran et al. 2021). While varied, all efforts share a common goal of making research more transparent, collaborative and accessible. Accordingly, Open Science has been defined by a recent systematic review as 'transparent and accessible knowledge that is shared and developed through collaborative networks' (Vicente-Saez and Martinez-Fuentes 2018: 434). Thus, Open Science shifts research practices away from a closed to a more open approach, similar to the usual prompt onstage, 'show, don't tell' (Dienlin et al. 2021).

Recent years have seen an increasing interest in activities of Open Science due to several current challenges in the field of psychology, most prominently a replication crisis, a publication bias and questionable research practices (Dienlin et al. 2021). As a result, several publishers, universities and funding agencies across the field of psychology are progressively encouraging or mandating Open Science practices (Colavizza et al. 2020; Huang et al. 2020; Vicente-Saez et al. 2020). Although not always labelled as such, the shifting

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research cultures inspired by Open Science have also impacted and benefitted the way research is conducted in dramatherapy. As outlined below, it has encouraged better research, facilitated access, inspired collaborations and may encourage further scholarship in our field.

## **HOW HAS DRAMATHERAPY BENEFITTED FROM OPEN SCIENCE?**

Open Science encourages transparency of research processes to increase the trustworthiness of findings and aims to make research better (Dienlin et al. 2021). Pre-registration, for example, encourages researchers to clearly outline their hypotheses, study design and analysis plan before any data collection or analysis (Nosek et al. 2018). Several platforms allow researchers to upload these protocols and link them to subsequent publications (e.g. PROSPERO, AsPredicted.org, Open Science Framework). These efforts can prevent questionable research practices by outlining all steps of the research beforehand (Dienlin et al. 2021). For instance, a recent review of several psychology studies revealed that studies lacking a pre-registered protocol reported effect sizes that were over twice as large as those reported by studies with completed pre-registration (Schäfer and Schwarz 2019).

This aspect of Open Science may be important for developing more rigorous practices in dramatherapy research. Recent systematic reviews have noted several limitations within extant studies (e.g. selective reporting, publication bias; Feniger-Schaal and Orkibi 2020; Keiller et al. 2023; Orkibi et al. 2023), some of which may be addressed by incorporating practices of Open Science. Sajnani et al. (2022), for example, developed and pre-registered a protocol for their recent systematic review. It outlined the scope, design and analysis of their study and ultimately lent further credibility to their findings (Sajnani et al. 2023). Implementing similar research practices may enhance the rigour of our research and consequently improve the academic standing of our field.

Furthermore, Open Science advocates for making research more accessible. An increasing number of journals facilitate open access to their articles, either through Diamond, Gold, Green or Hybrid Open Access publishing models. This is also evident in journals prominent in dramatherapy (see Table 1). Additionally, this movement towards accessibility does not only benefit the readers but also the authors. Bibliometric analyses indicate that articles published as open access gain increased visibility, leading to more citations and ultimately, a greater impact (Langham-Putrow et al. 2021). Accordingly, the openly available article by de Witte et al. (2021) was found in a recent bibliometric review to have the highest rate of citations per year among articles on dramatherapy (Korde et al. 2023).

Increased accessibility is particularly important to the field of dramatherapy, as many in the field do not benefit from academic affiliations. Consequently, they are disadvantaged when trying to access academic journals, as many of them remain behind an impenetrable paywall (Piwowar et al. 2018). Recent estimates suggest that, despite rising rates of open-access articles, 62 per cent of scholarly output is still not publicly available (Kurata et al. 2022). This affects not only practitioners of dramatherapy but also alternative-track dramatherapy students who complete training outside academia (Cook et al. 2024).

Fortunately, academic social networks and repositories such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu or the Open Science Framework are lowering these barriers of engaging with academic literature. Authors can upload the manuscripts, pre-prints or supplementary data of their published articles via these sites and make

Table 1: Open access publishing models.

Publishing model	What is it?	Examples
Diamond Open Access	Fully open access journal without any fees imposed on authors or readers.	<i>Dramatherapy</i> (starting 2024)
Gold Open Access	Journals that offer open access to their articles via article-processing charges (APCs) for submitting authors.	<i>GMS Journal of Arts Therapies</i> (i.e. Armstrong et al. 2019)
Hybrid Open Access	Traditional subscription-based journals that offer authors the option to publish open-access by paying an additional processing charge.	<i>Drama Therapy Review</i> (i.e. Sajnani et al. 2023), <i>Arts in Psychotherapy</i>
Green Open Access	Traditional subscription-based journals that offer authors the option to make their articles open-access by posting a pre-print version in a repository or academic social network (usually following an embargo period).	Most journals offer this option.

1. See [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359707447\\_Migrated\\_onto\\_the\\_Screen\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_Pandemic\\_on\\_the\\_Clinical\\_Practice\\_of\\_Drama\\_Therapy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359707447_Migrated_onto_the_Screen_The_Impact_of_the_COVID-19_Pandemic_on_the_Clinical_Practice_of_Drama_Therapy). Accessed 27 March 2024.

their contribution openly available (i.e. Green Open Access). For example, a recent article by Atsmon et al. (2022), published in the *Arts in Psychotherapy*, was uploaded as an accessible, pre-print version to ResearchGate.<sup>1</sup>

Initiatives specifically within the field of dramatherapy also encourage Open Science principles. The Dramatherapy Literature Database (Constien and Junker 2024), as well as the empirical, theory and student spreadsheets organized by the research committee of the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA; Armstrong et al. 2019; Cook et al. 2024; Cook et al. 2024), aims to make research easier to localize and more accessible. Specifically, the lists created by the NADTA purposefully provide e-mail addresses of corresponding authors for each listed article. This allows interested parties to directly inquire about obtaining a pre-print version of previously inaccessible articles and benefits particularly practitioners, independent researchers and students.

This example also speaks to the broader point that research in dramatherapy is increasingly conducted in collaboration. Two recent independent bibliometric analyses concluded that articles on dramatherapy are predominantly published in partnership between two or more authors (Constien and Junker 2023; Korde et al. 2023). An increasing number of academic institutions active in the field further facilitate cooperative practices (Constien and Junker 2023). This is evident in the activities surrounding the associations and scientific committees in the field, such as the World Alliance of Dramatherapy, the German Scientific Association for Arts Therapies, the scientific committee of the European Federation of Dramatherapy and the subcommittees of the research committee of the NADTA.

Open Science highlights collaboration as a potential catalyst of development (Ramachandran et al. 2021). Jones once cautioned against the dangers of 'closed circuits' (2015b: 123) within dramatherapy. In turn, the recently increasing connectivity in the field of dramatherapy may ultimately inspire and facilitate further research and result in greater research impact (Colavizza et al. 2020). Our investigation into publication trends and habits in dramatherapy (Constien and Junker 2023), for example, was inspired in large part by

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a master's thesis of Ciempa (2022) from Lesley University, who, in turn, drew on earlier work published by the NADTA research committee (Armstrong et al. 2019).

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO OPEN SCIENCE?

Despite these benefits, Open Science approaches may be challenging to implement and may not always apply to dramatherapy practices. Much of dramatherapy scholarship has historically been published in book chapters or monographs. Given that most Open Science approaches are geared towards journal articles, this challenges open access (Eve 2014). More importantly, practices of Open Science have predominantly been derived from approaches of quantitative research (e.g. pre-registration, Open Data), making it more difficult to apply to qualitative or arts-based research (Bennett 2021), which are dominant within dramatherapy literature (Fernández-Aguayo and Pino-Juste 2018; Jones 2015a). Additionally, Open Data may not be possible when data are protected by ethical boundaries or data protection regulations (Bennett 2021).

Furthermore, the cost of open-access publishing imposes a barrier for many researchers, who may be unable to afford article-processing charges associated with publishing in Gold Open Access journals (Borrego 2023; Nobes and Harris 2019). This affects particularly independent scholars from smaller academic institutions and may further escalate inequities in academia (Limaye 2022). Particularly scholars from the Global South have raised concerns regarding this 'pay to play' dynamic within open-access publishing (Mekonnen et al. 2022; Nabyonga-Orem et al. 2020). Although some journals have introduced fee waivers targeted at researchers from low- and middle-income countries, these initiatives are often found to be inadequate or ineffective (Borrego 2023; Nobes and Harris 2019).

Compounding this challenge, journals themselves may encounter difficulties in reducing fees or adopting Diamond Open Access models due to the inherent costs and necessary labour associated with publishing (Morrison 2016; Taubert et al. 2024). This is particularly felt by smaller and scholar-led journals, which depend on subscription revenues, third-party funds, affiliated associations and, most importantly, volunteer efforts (Morrison 2016). Consequently, a recent review found several small journals, which adopted an open access publishing model, unable to sustain themselves long term (Laakso et al. 2021).

## HOW CAN WE FACILITATE OPEN SCIENCE PRACTICES IN DRAMATHERAPY?

Nonetheless, the field of dramatherapy has implemented various Open Science practices, a few of which are outlined in this brief commentary. Before closing, I want to name three simple recommendations for students, practitioners and researchers of dramatherapy that may further facilitate Open Science within our field and encourage further scholarship and collaboration:

First, *engage with Open Science resources*. Tools, such as the reference lists hosted by the NADTA or the Dramatherapy Literature Database (Constien and Junker 2024), aim to aggregate the current evidence base of dramatherapy. Additionally, pre-registration platforms (e.g. PROSPERO, AsPredicted.org, Open Science Framework) allow researchers to review what projects are currently being undertaken in the field. Engaging with these resources can

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2. See <http://tinyurl.com/EmpiricalNominationForm>. Accessed 27 March 2024.
3. See <http://tinyurl.com/TheoryNominationForm>. Accessed 27 March 2024.
4. See <http://tinyurl.com/StudentResearchNominationForm>. Accessed 27 March 2024.

ensure that we work together and build on each other's work, rather than remain in 'closed circuits' (Jones 2015b: 123). For example, our recent review of student research (Cook et al. 2024) identified four theses examining tabletop role play as a therapeutic method submitted to different universities within three years (Adams 2022; Chaplan-Hoang 2019; Funyak 2019; Mendoza 2020). This exemplifies the potential synergies within our field.

Second, *make your articles or thesis available*. All prominent journals in the field of dramatherapy allow some form of open access (see Table 1). Even journals that do not facilitate Diamond or Gold models (e.g. *Arts in Psychotherapy, Drama Therapy Review*), still allow authors to upload a pre-print version of their article into a repository (e.g. osf.io) or academic social network (e.g. ResearchGate). The online resource Sherpa Romeo (<https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>. Accessed 27 March 2024) can be used to check publishers' open-access policies to ensure compliance. In addition, the NADTA encourages nominations for their reference lists.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> By facilitating open access, authors can lower the barriers to accessing research, increase the visibility of their work and facilitate collaborations with students and other researchers. Students can join in this effort by publishing their thesis within their school's repository or an academic social network and entering their thesis into the NADTA student research spreadsheet.

Third, *report your research process*. Open Data and supplementary material not only enhance the trustworthiness and impact of research (Colavizza et al. 2020) but also allow students and emerging researchers the opportunity to adopt best practices. Supplementary materials and Open Data, which transparently catalogue research, may facilitate a learning process and inspire further studies. In our ongoing work (Constien et al. 2023), we drew inspiration in crafting our search terms from de Witte et al. (2021), who transparently and exhaustively documented the search strategy for their systematic review in their published supplementary material. Many journals allow authors to publish material alongside their articles. Open Science platforms (e.g. osf.io, figshare.com) also facilitate storage and linking of research data. Alternatively, authors can add a data availability statement to their article and encourage interested parties to contact them directly to obtain a copy of the data.

## A MULTI-RELATIONAL PLAYSPACE FOR RESEARCH

In conclusion, I believe Open Science to be a good match for many of the principles that are central to dramatherapy, i.e. its aim of creating space, its critical reflection of power hierarchies and its embrace of collaboration and inclusivity in practice and research. As drama therapists, we seek to provide an open, accessible and inclusive practice for our clients, as well as acknowledge the need to engage with dominant cultures at large to bridge the gap between the therapeutic space and the broader societal landscape (Cook et al. 2022; Sajnani et al. 2017). An Open Science approach lets us adopt this attitude in our conduct of research as well. In embracing Open Science, we actively seek collaboration and exchange of knowledge with a wider community. This entails not only sharing our findings but also engaging in a continuous dialogue that invites diverse perspectives and experiences into the fold. Also importantly, it inspires research into the further development of dramatherapy. In short, it creates a multi-relational playspace for research and answers Sajnani's query on how 'drama therapists create knowledge together' (2015: 5).

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The data cited in this commentary are openly available on the Open Science Framework at <https://doi.org/10.17605/osf.io/xphyn>. The author has been part of the development and maintenance of the Dramatherapy Literature Database as well as the NADTA student research spreadsheet that are referenced in this commentary. No other conflicts of interest are to be disclosed.

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