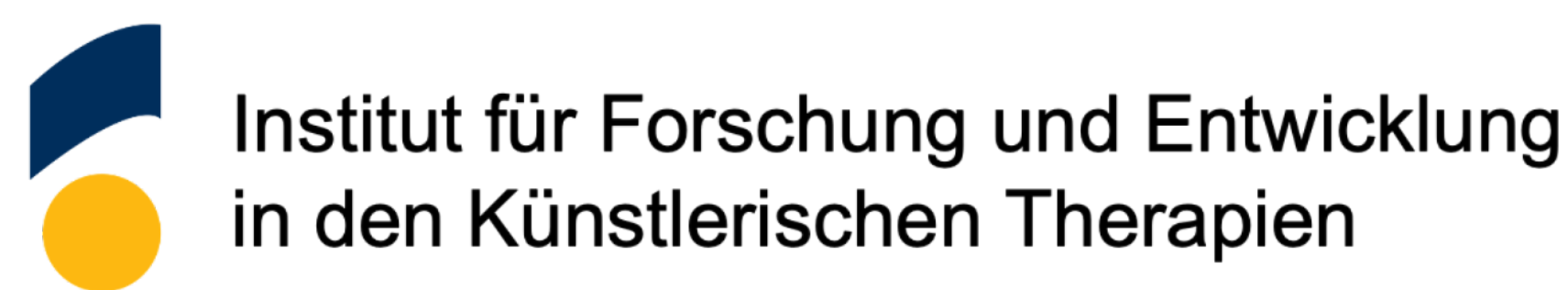


# Client experiences of drama therapy: A systematic review and qualitative meta-analysis

Tobias Constien, Akhila Khanna, Amélie Wiberg

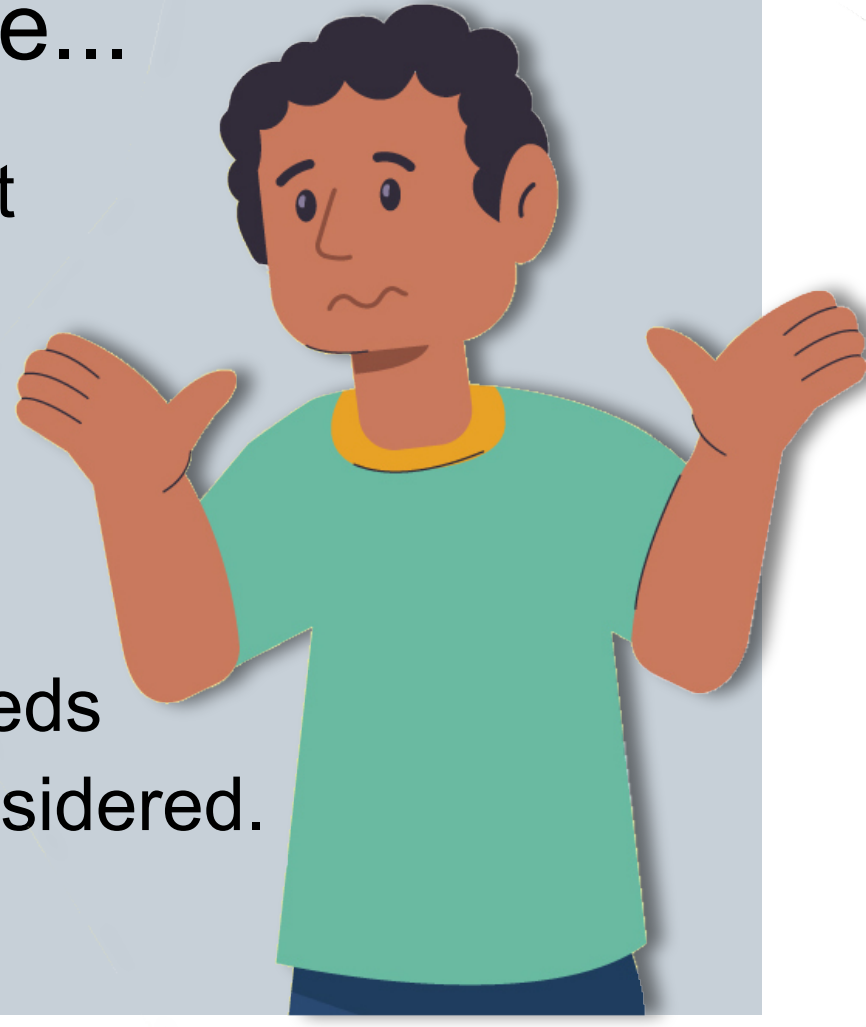


## A. BACKGROUND

Clients' voices are missing from the current research in drama therapy on processes and mechanisms of change.

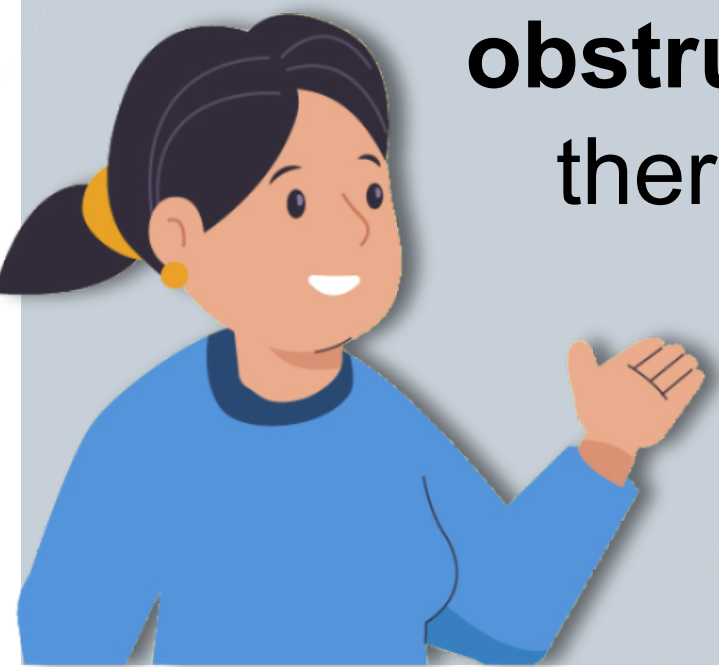
This is a **problem**, because...

1. Therapists and clients do not always see eye to eye.
2. Client participation is central for therapeutic success
3. Evidence-based practice needs client's experience to be considered.



## B. OBJECTIVE

What do **clients** perceive as **supportive** or **obstructive** aspects of the drama therapy process?



## C. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research studies in drama therapy were screened, aggregated and synthesized following the process of a **qualitative meta-analysis**.

Out of 313 initial search results, **20 studies** fit pre-specified inclusion criteria.

## D. RESULTS

**302 clients** reporting **460 experiences** of drama therapy that were synthesized into three domains, **nine meta-categories** and 21 sub-categories.

### Supportive Aspects

1. Representing and exploring inner experiences symbolically allowed new insights and perspectives to emerge
2. Participants felt able to explore novel experiences, have fun and use their intrinsic creativity in drama therapy which allowed them to experience new parts of themselves
3. Drama therapy allows clients to access, regulate and release emotions which lead to a state of calm and relaxation
4. Physical experiences in drama therapy encourages a more positive connection to their body and an increase in energy.

➔ **Cluster 1: Drama therapy allows clients a deep exploration and connection to one's self.**

5. Participants experienced a sense of connection and belonging in dramatherapy.
6. Participants felt dramatherapy allowed them to get actively involved in their therapy and gave them space to have their story listened to.

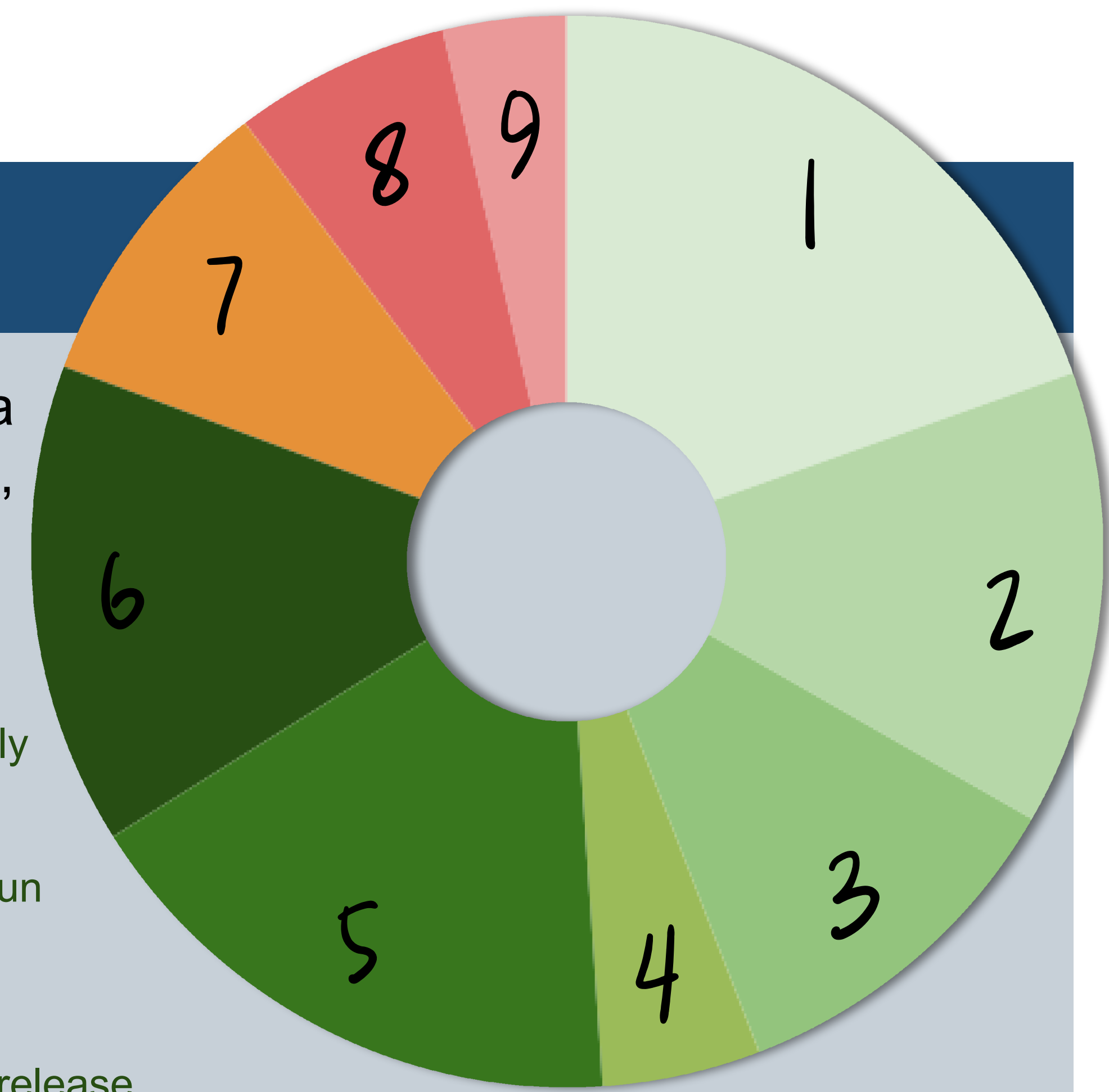
➔ **Cluster 2: Drama therapy allows clients to improve their relationship to others and their community.**

### Supportive But Difficult Aspects

7. Participants felt like dramatherapy made them step out of their comfort zone, which they experienced as initially difficult but subsequently rewarding.

### Obstructive Aspects

8. Participants felt like the activities of dramatherapy made them uncomfortable or were irrelevant to their therapeutic progress.
9. Participants felt the group structure to be ill-suited for therapy and that dramatherapy was too short.



## E. TAKE AWAYS

1. **Supportive experiences** of drama therapy overlap with common factors of psychotherapy and joint factors of the creative arts therapies.
2. There are **unique experiences** of drama therapy that are based on its creative, playful and active aspects.

3. **Research** in drama therapy needs to become more attentive to its **scope, breath and rigor**.

- Obstructive aspects are underreported
- Research samples are not representative
- Quality of studies need to be improved.

Only by including clients experiences will we be able to formulate a **theory of change** for drama therapy.



Constien, T., Wiberg, A., & Khanna, A. (2023, July 6). Pre-Registration: Qualitative Meta-Analysis of Client Experiences of Dramatherapy. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/W7J2N>



**Tobias Constien**, BA (Drama Therapy), H.Dip. (Psychology), [tobias.constien@lb.hfwu.de](mailto:tobias.constien@lb.hfwu.de)

**Akhila Khanna**, MA (New York University), LCAT (Jacobi Medical Center, New York), [ak8334@nyu.edu](mailto:ak8334@nyu.edu)

**Amélie Wiberg**, BA (Drama Therapy), [a.wiberg@web.de](mailto:a.wiberg@web.de)

Please reach out for more information!