

**Poor mental health in the performance industry:
Methods of prevention and support.**

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DECLARATION

This research project is a product of my own work and does not infringe the ethical principles set out in the university's Handbook for Research Ethics. I agree that it may be made available for reference via any and all media by any and all means now known or developed in the future at the discretion of the University.

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ABSTRACT

This research project aims to explore what support is available to those within the performance industry who are struggling with their mental health. It also looks into the publicising of this help, as well as the knowledge of its availability. It questions the differences between how mental health is portrayed through musical theatre, compared to how it is treated within. The methods include secondary research as well as primary research done in the form of a mixed-method questionnaire and feedback from the audience of the part practical performance.

The findings of this research are that there are organisations available to specifically help those within the industry. The study focuses specifically on three of these. They are: Arts Minds, BAPAM and Time 4 Change. The research then led me to present my findings through my part practical performance element to my peers. The main focus of this is the idea that although the help is available, it is not known about and therefore isn't making the positive contribution that it should.

The study then pushes to question why this is the case. What can be done to increase awareness from an earlier stage? Where can help be published and in what situation so that it doesn't undermine the teaching and directing styles of the industry? The further recommendation is then to look into this issue from a broader view point, tackling the stigma that surrounds mental health in general.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Throughout my own training in the performing arts, I have noticed the large number of people suffering with diverse mental health issues. As a result, I went on to research the correlation between the performing arts industry and mental health illnesses.

Performing arts workers experience symptoms of anxiety ten times higher than the general population, and depression symptoms five times higher. (Strode, 2017)

It was only after this research that I became aware of the size and complexity of this issue which led me to conduct this study to investigate what support and guidance there is for those suffering with these conditions within the industry, and whether or not there are any changes being actively made to attempt to reduce this issue.

1.2 Rationale

Having seen many fellow performers living with poor mental health conditions and having experienced, first-hand, issues of mental health, I know that mental illnesses are incredibly diverse.

There are many different mental health problems [...] Everyone's experience is different and can change at different times. (Mind.org.uk, 2017)

Regardless of the variety of mental health issues though, my research was showing that there seems to be a distinct lack of action taken by the industry to reduce the number of mental illness cases. Upon doing this research, I was finding it affecting my own mental health. For my own benefit, I decided to follow a more positive route of research. I felt that it was important to explore what help *is* available and present my findings to a group of people who, like myself, could find it to be a great resource. You will find the transcript of the part practical performance in **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of my research has been to explore in what ways support and awareness are available, and to look into the possibility that this issue might be helped if the support available was more publicised. Within this aim, I investigated whether it is possible to further explore the topic of mental health in settings such as children's groups, through training and into the lives of working actors, and whether proactive support could then reduce the number of negative cases.

The study first looked at the most common mental illnesses within the industry and the possible causes into why the rates are so high. My research then explores what is being done to combat the problem outside of the industry and question whether there are similar protocols in place within the performing arts, and if not, why not? Along with this, the research investigates what support systems *are* currently in place for those suffering within the performing arts industry. The aim was then to conduct some primary research into the attitudes of those training or beginning their career in performance. This has been carried out using a questionnaire and feedback on the part practical performance. The questionnaire aims to determine whether the participants feel it could benefit the industry to have heightened awareness of the risks and available support or, on the contrary, whether they feel that active protection of mental health in this industry could undermine what some people might call "harsh" styles of drama school teaching, the audition process, and competition throughout a performer's career.

2. Methods and Methodology

2.1 Ethical Considerations

In order to make sure that my research stays within the ethical guidelines set out in the University of Gloucestershire University Principles, I made sure to “explain to participants the extent to which they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality” and explain “the right of participants to refuse participation at any time”. (Glos.ac.uk, 2018) I made it clear that by taking part in the survey, they agree that I can quote any qualitative data that I collect from the sections with an expand and explain box. This goes along with the university guidelines which state that you must “discuss potential uses of data with participants and obtain their agreement”. (Glos.ac.uk, 2018) I will also explain that if given permission to use quotes I will use them honorably, keeping them in context.

2.2 Sampling

By asking people who have followed my own training path or have a connection to performing arts, I carried out Purposive Sampling. This has been defined by John Dudovskiy as “a sampling technique in which [the] researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of [the] population to participate in the study”. (Dudovskiy, 2017) Their opinions may vary but they will mostly be from a similar perspective. By having both multiple choice questions and opportunities for open answers, I hoped to be able to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

2.3 Questionnaire

The mix methodology questionnaire (**Appendix 1 & 2**) was made available after the part practical performance on social media platforms to be done anonymously online via Surveyplanet.com. I shared it asking for anyone with a connection to the performing arts to fill it out. It is a mainly multiple choice survey with the option to expand or explain some answers. The good use of a survey is explained in an article by the Oxford Academic, “Surveys are well suited to descriptive studies, but can also

be used to explore aspects of a situation, or to seek explanation and provide data for testing hypotheses.” (Kelley, 2003)

2.4 Methodology Conclusion

In order to create a credible study in this area I collected secondary research from books, websites, journals and articles. I did this in a number of ways to improve probability of accurate answers and to collect research from different perspectives. My secondary research examined mental health within the general workplace and education as well as the performance industry both in the UK and abroad. Along with the questionnaire, my primary research also involved gaining feedback from the audience of my part practical to help with its analysis. **(Appendix 6)**

2.5 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire received 45 responses including participants from my class, other people studying musical theatre and members of the general population who have opinions or connections to the performing arts. This added credibility to the results. You will find a breakdown of the most key results in section **5. Findings**.

The aims of the questionnaire were to measure the awareness of the participants in mental health within the performing arts and where they had gained this awareness. I also gained qualitative data of possible opportunities for speaking about the issue of mental health within the performing arts. I decided to address the stigma of mental health by questioning the comfortability of seeking personal help for issues of mental health.

The results of the questionnaire were successful overall, although in hindsight, would be more accurate if made available prior to the part practical performance. Some of the participants were included in the audience of the part practical performance. This meant that the results were skewed as the awareness of the audience was greatly improved by the presentation about the different organisations within the part practical.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This will be a presentation of literature on mental health among practitioners of the performance industry. It will focus on four areas of study. First, a look into the rates and causes of ill mental health within the industry. Secondly, a collection of data illustrating what the current protocol of mental health support there is outside of the performance industry, among the general public. Reflecting on these findings, the third section will be an overview of what methods of support and action plans for improvement are currently in place for practitioners of the performance industry, as well as how mental illness is portrayed within musical theatre and its effect. Finally, there will be research into why there is limited support publicised to those within the industry.

3.2 Mental illness in the performance industry

As stated in a study by Davies, C, Knuiman, M and Rosenberg, M (2016),

Good mental health or being 'mentally healthy' can be defined as a state of well-being whereby an individual is able to contribute to the community, cope with the stresses of everyday life, is able to realise their potential and work productively. (Davies, Knuiman and Rosenberg, 2016)

A lack of good mental health can impact on everyday living. When analysing a study performed by Victoria University in Australia, Cal Strode, of the Mental Health Foundation, "found that performing arts workers experience symptoms of anxiety ten times higher than the general population, and depression symptoms five times higher." (Strode, 2017)

Pat O'Toole, the Course Director of the Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance Acting Foundation Course, supports this, stating that,

Issues related to mental health are more common among performers than the general population with one in three of us affected every year. Over the past five years Universities and Drama Schools in particular have seen a dramatic increase in the demand for support for students with mental health issues. (O'Toole, n.d.)

When referencing the same Australian University study, Juno, A (2016) says these poor mental health conditions “stem from lack of employment security, general work environment, perfectionism, complex interpersonal relationships, drinking culture within the arts, and ‘vicarious trauma’ from absorbing the emotions and experiences of various characters.”

There is argument that the industry itself takes advantage of the self worth and therefore emotional stability and mental wellbeing in its own practitioners.

*Performing artists are often asked to work for free, or ‘for exposure’.
Maintaining a healthy sense of self can be difficult if your work, passion and skills are consistently devalued in this way. (Strode, 2017)*

3.3 General protocol to support mental health

In very recent years there has been a focus on the poor state of mental health in work and education environments. There have been studies and action plans put into place to try and reduce the number of people affected and to help those already affected.

In a report by the National Association of School Psychologists in America, it says that “according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years” and “estimates of up to 60% of students do not receive the treatment they need due to stigma and lack of access to services”. (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016)

After a petition to ‘Make mental health education compulsory in primary and secondary schools’, the UK Government (Department for Education, 2017) responded by saying they “want mental health to be an everyday concern in all institutions”. In a summary report by the Department for Education, an important factor that came up a number of times was to “support the development of emotional literacy and resilience to help pupils to explain, understand and find ways to manage their emotions and mental health”. (NatCen Social Research & the National Children’s Bureau and Policy Team, 2017) A very common treatment for those suffering with anxiety or depression is Cognitive Behavior Therapy or Mindfulness. This report spoke of schools that aim to “prevent mental health problems from arising

or escalating by equipping students with skills that could enable them to [...] cope better with challenges". These include practising these skills with "emotional literacy, problem-solving or mindfulness sessions".

There has also been a movement of awareness for those in Higher Education. Such organisations as Mental Health First Aid England, have developed programs to "teach people to spot the symptoms of mental health issues, offer initial help and guide a person towards support". (Mhfaengland.org, n.d.) They say that "by training staff and students in MHFA you can [...] stop preventable issues arising by building a supportive culture around mental health".

In the working and business sector, there have also been action plans made to support those struggling with their mental health. The National Mental Health Development Unit (2010) have reported that in the general population, "depression and anxiety are 4-10 times more prevalent among people who have been unemployed for more than 12 weeks".

In January, 2017, the Prime Minister of Great Britain requested that a review of mental health in the workforce take place.

Many employers are already creating healthy, inclusive workplaces, but more needs to be done so that employers provide the support needed for employees with mental health conditions. (May, T. 2017)

The review (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017) includes an action plan with the responsibilities of the Public Sector, the Government and of employers.

It also includes examples of these actions being put into place and the first hand benefits felt by the employees involved. Ian Callaghan from Rethink Mental Illness is quoted as saying that he "really valued being supported through having sessions of Resilience Training. This has proved invaluable and has helped to address the potential work-related contributing factors that can lead to a bipolar episode."

Along with these future plans of improvement, there are organisations currently available to anyone needing support. In the UK, there are many resources available online and on the phone including Mind, Samaritans and Rethink Mental Illness, as well as local support hotlines, organisations and counsellors. These can be of incredible value to people who are struggling. It is important just to know that there is someone there to listen. Mind (Mind.org.uk, n.d.) has said, "there is always

somewhere else you can get help and the majority of people working and volunteering in mental health do genuinely care about helping you get the support you need for your recovery”.

3.4 Support within the performance industry

Although there are seemingly many improving routes of support for those suffering with mental illness among the general public, there is significantly less for those suffering within the performance industry. As Juno, A (2016) states, “It seems that when it comes to the mental health of arts professionals, there are shockingly few easily accessible resources for an issue that is hugely more common than we realise”.

From looking at the steps being taken within general education and the work environment, there are very few similar action plans within the arts. One organisation that is trying to change this is the #time4change Mental Health Charter. They have created a document with information on different types of mental illness and where to seek help, both in a broad sense and with particular reference to support for performers. It also contains an action plan for training institutions, theatres, agents and production companies. For drama schools it aims

to provide annual mental health awareness training for staff, with an emphasis on building resilience, recognising students potentially experiencing mental health difficulties and how to sign-post/refer. (Mental Health Charter, 2016)

As of 2017, Rose Bruford College is the only drama school that has signed onto the charter and is “committing to promote robust mental health policies and protocols that will contribute to positive mental health and help remove the stigma of mental illness and psychological distress”. (Earley, n.d.)

Along with the Charter, there are some other organisations available to practitioners of the performance industry. These include ArtsMinds and the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM). These provide knowledge and support similar to organisations like Mind but focus on causes specific to performers or performance industry workers. ArtsMinds was founded by a collaboration of BAPAM, Equity, The Stage and Spotlight. These are four major organisations for the arts within the UK. On why they decided to make this collaboration, the website says,

The trigger for the project came with a series of suicides from within our community which resulted in a call for some kind of action. (Mental Health Charter, 2016)

From the particular perspective of Musical Theatre, mental health is a topic that is becoming more thoroughly explored in its own art form. There are now a lot more musicals dealing directly with these themes and the people suffering from these conditions; such as *Next to Normal* and *Dear Evan Hansen*. With this in mind, in the article 'A Light in the Dark' by Alexa Juno, it says that

For a community that takes so much pride in putting on shows that add to the discussion surrounding mental health, we should make a bigger show out of recognising the potential for mental illness within our sphere and do more to protect and empower our own. (Juno, 2016)

The argument is that the industry is represented as supportive but in actuality has done very little beyond portraying the issues of the characters to the audience.

Greg Harms looks at it from another perspective. He notes that work is being done to reduce the stigma attached to these illnesses.

Hopefully the success of Next To Normal will result in the continued inclusion of people with mental illness into musical theatre stories and continue to normalize psychological treatment and the experiences of those who deal with mental illness on a daily basis. (Harms, 2015)

Looking back at the reading of support to the general public, one of the core aims for many of the organisations is to remove the stigma, as this will greatly encourage the capability to seek help. Brian Yorkey (n.d.), the writer of *Next to Normal*, supports this claim, stating that, "As long as we are open and acknowledging these things; acknowledging the illnesses the people are struggling with, there's hope."

3.5 Lack of awareness and knowledge within the industry

Although there are some forms of support, there are also claims that these support systems are hard to find. They are not easily publicised and, throughout the industry, practitioners are not taught how to access them or how to avoid needing them in the first place.

One argument as to why there is little progress made to reduce the cases of poor mental health within the industry is that it has become an accepted byproduct of the

industry itself. In an article by Jennifer Andersen (2016), she claims that “To remain in the entertainment industry requires a personal accommodation with poverty and destructive working conditions”. It is just something that the practitioner needs to learn to deal with and accept.

Reflecting on this harsh truth of the industry Andersen points out that,

Accepting that damaging industrial conditions in the entertainment sector is a given is like offering overburdened office workers colouring books to practice mindfulness instead of allowing them to go home on time without fear of seeming uncommitted to their jobs. (Andersen, 2016)

In terms of the stigma attached to dealing with poor mental health, there is no other industry where mental illness is so glamorized. In modern popular culture there is so much weight put on the struggles of artists; having grown up in poverty, being from a broken home, having been through an addiction, to then create art is seen by spectators as a thing of beauty.

‘Star Wars’ actress Carrie Fisher ended up turning her battle with bipolar disorder into a book-turned-Meryl Streep-film ‘Postcards From the Edge,’ and later a best-selling memoir and stage show titled ‘Wishful Drinking.’ (Faulkner, 2016)

There is a quote in the Time4Change Mental Health Charter that says, “In rehab you’re an addict; on stage you’re a tortured genius” (Mohr, 1999). It could be argued that this is why the problems are not being taken as seriously as they should be.

In an interview by Jessie Thompson (2017) for the London Evening Standard, a drama school alumnus, when speaking about training whilst suffering with depression stated that

Your tool is yourself and your self is confused and lost. No other form of professional training is based so heavily on self-examination. Every time I received feedback on what I was doing I took it as an extreme criticism, rather than the simple observation that it was. (Anonymous, 2017)

It could be said that the very way people are trained into the profession has a lot to do with their emotional stability as they enter into the industry. With that in mind, it would be a step forward for mental health and self preservation within the industry, if

not to change the style of teaching, to include some additional guidance on self care not just to do with body but also with mind.

3.6 Conclusion

It is into this area of further research that this dissertation will continue. This will be done by conducting surveys of those who are currently going through training. The results will be varied on opinion as to whether a more supportive approach could be the way forward or whether it is not a conducive industry for change and support. The part practical will represent the possibility of a more supportive industry to show examples of possible changes to be made.

4. Part Practical Discussion

4.1 Conception

My practical element was devised in three parts. Through the course of my research project, I have explored a number of titles before finally settling on this path of research. In all of the different variations of title, the first section of my part practical has remained the only constant element. This was to include some movement performed along with a recorded vocal track in order to communicate the difficulties that performers face within the industry that affect their mental health and how they suffer in silence. There is usually a big difference between what people express outwardly compared to how they are truly feeling internally.

To remain in the entertainment industry requires a personal accomodation with poverty and destructive working conditions. (Andersen, 2016)

It is this acceptance of the terrible conditions within this field despite the effect that it has on the mental health of the practitioners, that keeps the sufferers silent. It is just expected that working in this industry includes these difficulties, therefore, a voice for change has not yet been projected.

When carrying out my secondary research, I was expecting to find very little help for those suffering with ill mental health within the industry. I was shocked to discover that there *are* organisations available to those specifically within the arts. From this discovery what struck me next was the lack of awareness that I had. As someone who has suffered personally with my own mental health, I could not believe that I had not known earlier about these organisations available to aid those within the arts.

From my findings, I decided that what I wanted to present in my part practical performance was a method of raising awareness and giving advice to my audience. I decided to do this through the medium of a TED Talk. It seemed to me that this was the best way to get across, what I saw as, vital and urgent information. I demonstrated how, though there could have been many opportunities, this information had never been given to me throughout my training and involvement in

the arts industry. This is due to lack of knowledge. Even the people who we should be able to seek guidance from, for example our trainers and tutors, do not know where to direct us for further help.

The third and final part of my practical performance was to relay the information available to help those in need. I also wanted to focus in on the point that the performance industry is known as being very supportive, for example of those identifying with different sexuality and gender orientation. The help and support given, affirms the representation of these people within the genre of performing arts itself. Queer theory is a very prominent topic discussed and represented within theatre, screen and other art mediums. Although mental health is represented within these same genres, the support provided 'off stage' or 'behind the scenes' is far more limited.

For a community that takes so much pride in putting on shows that add to the discussion surrounding mental health, we should make a bigger show out of recognising the potential for mental illness within our sphere and do more to protect and empower our own. (Juno, 2016)

As previously mentioned in my literature review, there are many forms of art, including musical theatre, that use mental health as an influence. It then stands to question, if musical theatre will make a profit out of these shows (shows that will have a big following due to the number of people researched to be involved with musical theatre and affected by mental health), but not support those people in a working situation to improve the state of mental health within the industry, are they then making a profit out of the ill mental health of that audience and therefore taking advantage of musical theatre's own practitioners?

4.2 Development and Performance

I knew at the outset that my piece would include a dramatised representation of the poor mental health of a performer. I had originally wanted to focus on a very specific story. This was to follow a girl's training and her breakdown of mental wellbeing throughout. After completing the research for my literature review, I chose, instead, to cover a number of different topics through this dramatized piece. Many of the

cause factors into the high rates of mental health within the industry are documented in an *OnStage Blog*. These include “Lack of employment security, general work environment, perfectionism, complex interpersonal relationships” (Juno, 2016). The London Evening Standard published an article by Cat Strode called ‘Mental health in the arts: Are we talking about it enough?’. This online article also spoke about the different causes of poor mental health among performers.

*Performing artists are often asked to work for free, or ‘for exposure’.
Maintaining a healthy sense of self can be difficult if your work, passion and skills are consistently devalued in this way. (Strode, 2017)*

These two texts were the major influence for the first part of my performance. The other influence was the feeling of ‘a cycle’. From the beginning of my research project, I had a phrase that was directing my research. This was, ‘the cycle of competition, rejection and inadequacy’. From my research I discovered that for performers this was not just a cycle in their professional careers but in their personal life. They suffer from the lack of interaction with friends and family due to unsocial working hours and differences of opinion. The piece that developed from this research was a form of mime along with an audio recorded commentary. It was a performer repeatedly going to auditions and having to fight this cycle of rejection and inadequacy but doing it because she wants to do what she loves. It also shows a different perspective to the often glamorised struggles of a working actor. “In rehab you’re an addict; on stage you’re a tortured genius” (Mohr, 1999)

To follow was the informative section of my practical performance. I began writing from my own personal perspective reflecting on the research that I had done. This became a pedagogical TED Talk. When first introduced to the communication method of ‘TED Talks’, I was very inspired by the speakers. They were very passionate in their way of speaking and getting their point across. I have watched a number of TED Talks online and they are always very engaging. “The only reason to give a TED talk is that you feel passionately about something, and your sense of purpose creates an energy boost for both you and your audience.” (Kaye, n.d.) After my own experiences, the experiences of those around me and my research, mental health within the arts and learning more about it became a great passion of mine.

The aims of the talk were to suggest different opportunities for raising awareness, to highlight the lack of knowledge within the industry of the help available and to discuss the portrayal of mental health within the genre of musical theatre. Brian Yorkey (n.d.), the writer of *Next to Normal*, a contemporary musical from 2008, said “As long as we are open and acknowledging these things; acknowledging the illnesses the people are struggling with, there’s hope.”

The speech was broken down into several sections: What research has been done previously. The unique relationship between performers and their chosen field. My personal experience throughout training without having mental wellbeing taught compared to Rose Bruford college who say they are “committing to promote robust mental health policies and protocols that will contribute to positive mental health and help remove the stigma of mental illness and psychological distress”. (Earley, n.d.) Finally, the speech explains what help is available, even if we don’t know about it, and how musical theatre is giving or not giving these issues a voice.

The final element of my part practical involved the use of a song from musical theatre. I wanted to show the contrast between what the industry is promoting and what it is doing to aid and support the issue. The song I chose was *You Will Be Found* from *Dear Evan Hansen* (2015). The words of this song are exactly the message that I wanted to get across.

*Well, let that lonely feeling wash away
Maybe there’s a reason to believe you’ll be okay
‘Cause when you don’t feel strong enough to stand
You can reach, reach out your hand
And oh, someone will come running
And I know, they’ll take you home
[...]
You will be found*

(lyrics from *You Will Be Found*, *Dear Evan Hansen* © Pasek and Paul, 2015)

The song’s purpose within the story of the show is to promote good mental health and to offer support to those who are too afraid to speak out. The point that I wanted

to make along with the lyrics, is that “The support is out there but at the moment the sufferer is the one who has to do the finding and searching rather than ‘being found’”. This can be found in the transcript of my part practical (**Appendix 5**). I thought it was important that this part of the performance be done as a musical performance rather than a speech. It is a message to those involved with musical theatre, about help within musical theatre, told through the genre of musical theatre.

The thing that really hit home for me was the contrast of 'You Will Be Found' with the readings talking about how no one gets found they have to look for help themselves. Think this is very true to how mental health is treated and how backwards it is. I think it represented the topic well and very much showed how it has got better but still more needs to be done about being able to get help. (Keiran Littlejohns, feedback for part practical)

Along with singing, I played a projection of a cartoon version of the song. (Ccinee11, 2017) During development I researched how the song is staged in the show. It is done very simply and as I wanted this section to contrast with the TED Talk, I decided to add some more visuals to help with the performance and context of the show and song. To add to the impact of this presentation, I read out some information from the websites of the aforementioned arts mental health organisations. This included information on *ArtsMinds*, *The British Association of Performing Arts Medicine* and the *Time 4 Change Mental Health Charter*.

Often Performers do not want to speak up about mental health issues as they've spent so long growing that “thick skin” and making themselves indispensable. What we need to be able to understand is that mental health is just as important an issue to address as injuries and physical illnesses. (Time 4 Change, 2016)

4.3 Part Practical Analysis

The aim of my part practical performance was to relay information that I had found during research. The audience of my performance was full of my peers, many of whom I know to have struggled with their own mental health. I wanted to offer them the help that I had found. As an audience they were very responsive and appreciated what I had represented. Although my part practical did not necessarily ask questions to the audience, they gave feedback that it was information that they were previously unaware of and that they were shocked to hear my findings. (**Appendix 6**)

For me personally your part practical has a very positive effect, in the sense that you hear everywhere about the negative sides of mental illness and all situations within the musical theatre industry that can be problematic for somebody's mental health, however your part practical showed that there are places within our industry that are beneficial for someone facing mental health problems and have created a platform for people to get the necessary help that they need. (Anonymous feedback for part practical)

This pushes me to go further with this subject to explore possible avenues for wider and earlier awareness.

5. Findings

5.1 Critical Theory

When looking at my topic critically, it was suggested that I look at feminist theory. In investigating this further, I discovered that in terms of mental health stigma, it is actually a bigger problem among men. “Many mental illnesses affect both men and women however men may be less likely to talk about their feelings and seek help.” (Nimh.nih.gov, 2018) This is probably due to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. It is often seen as the “dominant form of masculinity”. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as

Any man that aspires to embody this masculinity must display aggressive and violent behaviour whilst restraining the flow of vulnerable emotions. He should also exhibit strength and toughness, and be competitive and successful.
(Morettini, 2016)

The uncomfortability of men to seek help, due to this idealist view of strength that many men feel the need to embody, has meant that “Men make up over 75 percent of suicide victims in the United States, with one man killing himself every 20 minutes.” (Whitley, 2017) To focus on this issue from a purely female perspective then felt to be elitist. When there are so many areas in which men have been put before women and women have had to fight for equality, it seemed to be anti feminist to not support the group without a voice. Beyonce, who is a very active feminist in today’s popular culture, said “Humanity requires both men and women and we are equally important and need one another”. (Knowles-Carter, 2014) When men are the minority of people getting help for mental illness, they should be given extra support in order to achieve equality.

This illness can strike anybody down, at any time. It doesn't target [...] a particular gender. And yet, one still feels the need to justify that.
(Time To Change, 2017)

5.2 Primary Research Findings

From my primary research, I gained understanding on what the basis of knowledge was on this subject. When asking those who are involved with performing arts about their mental health, 60% of those with issues of mental health who answered yes or no said it was due to their involvement in performance. **(Appendix 2.i)** This is a

significant number but one that I was expecting after having done my primary research.

The next question is the one that more than any other had led my research project and purpose of the part practical performance. I again got the results that I was expecting. Although so many people are affected, very few were knowledgeable about the topic or what help is available to them. 86% of participants said that they don't feel like they are given enough information and would like more to be readily available. **(Appendix 2.iii)**

Only 50% of people had heard of the three organisations that I focused on including Arts Minds, BAPAM and Time 4 Change. **(Appendix 2.iv)** This is noted to be a higher result due to the fact that participants of the questionnaire included the audience of my part practical in which I spoke about these organisations. Time 4 Change have created a very valuable Charter, with more publicity this could have incredible results in reducing the number of mental illness cases within the industry. More publicity is the key to making people aware of the help available so they can make use of the available resources.

5.3 Further Secondary Research Findings

In my further reading since my literature review I have found more examples of this subject being given a platform of expression. In the last few weeks, on the 25th April 2018, there was an article published in The Stage called 'Performers open up about anxiety battles in a bid to break taboo around mental health'. It contains a very positive message that echoes the aims of this piece of writing. It speaks of the help available, for example Arts Minds, and the need for more of it. Juliet Messenger is the Welfare Counsellor at the National Theatre. She says,

I haven't yet found another in-house version of me. I know actors often have to navigate their way through finding private therapy or going to their GP once they leave for extra support. It's a shame there isn't something a bit more coordinated to help with that. It's important to us that actors and any member of staff gets support if they need it. (Messenger, 2018)

I was not previously aware that any theatre company had this job position. It is such a simple resource to supply. It surprises me that such a prominent British theatre company has this support available and that others have not yet followed suit. This could very easily be a starting point for great improvements within the industry.

This article also speaks into the silence that performers often adopt when suffering with mental issues. Quoting Jodie Jacobs in the article, “‘We don’t talk about it enough,’ she said, adding that actors had been sold ‘the greatest piece of propaganda’ with the saying ‘the show must go on’.” (Hemley, 2018)

‘It’s okay not to be okay’ is a campaign being used by many organisations such as You Matter - Suicide Prevention Lifeline, See Me Scotland and in articles by The Guardian and Huffington Post. A simple internet search of this phrase brings up pages of results, many of which are articles about speaking out, seeking help and destroying the stigma that makes it taboo to seek help.

The aim of the article in The Stage is to break the stigma attached to mental health specifically in the performing arts. For me personally, I feel gratified in my research that the problem that led me to begin this path of study has made advances even during my own process of writing. To finish this project by finding in my further research that, so recently, progress is being made to address the issues of mental health within the industry, pushes me to want to take this project further.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The process of the literature review was very informative in guiding what the aims should be as they changed from the original idea. The direction of my research became the objective to teach and pass on information. This was then done through the part practical performance.

I wanted to give my audience the information that I had gathered during my research and then start a discussion about how this information could then be made readily available to others. This was in talking about my own personal experiences and the opportunities where this information could have made available. For example during a module called 'The Healthy Performer' at college. I highlighted the work done by Time 4 Change and their efforts to set up support systems throughout the industry. These ideas are also echoed in an online article by The Stage, "Stevenson said producers of big shows should consider having mental health professionals at hand, so cast members suffering from anxiety can access help more easily." (Hemley, 2018)

The primary research, conducted through a questionnaire and feedback, confirmed my assumptions of lack of awareness based on my secondary research. The feedback of the part practical then showed the success of the pedagogical function that I had wanted it to have. The audience were pleased to have been presented with the information and suggested further opportunities for use of the presentation to not only raise awareness but to make a change. "I definitely think you could take it further as a project, to take into drama schools etc." (Anonymous feedback for part practical)

Although I received positive feedback from this and, as I mentioned previously, many in the audience had experienced their own personal challenges, what I wasn't expecting to discover was the stigma and judgments that we ourselves proliferate.

Despite many other projects surrounding the issues of mental health, and this informative performance, I became aware that in day to day life it is very easy to pass subconscious judgements and that even those who have suffered themselves cannot always see the suffering of others and relay the support available. It could be argued that this is a causative factor in the lack of knowledge.

If we spent more time supporting and looking out for one another, rather than judging, perhaps situations could change. We must change the dialogue and attitude to mental illness, and it starts with us. (Time To Change, 2017)

It could also be a cause of the self-stigmatisation which stops people from seeking help. Within the working environment,

These attitudes show how a lack of understanding coupled with fear and stigma can lead to little demonstration of empathy and may be a reason why so many employees are frightened to speak up about their problems [...] of those who said they would avoid telling the truth, 23 percent said they were afraid of being judged and preferred to keep their health issues private; 15 percent were afraid they would not be believed and seven percent said they feared their line manager's reaction to being told the truth. (Winwood, 2017)

6.2 Recommendations

In starting my research expecting to find that there is nothing being done about mental health for the good of the industry, and finding that in fact there is, has meant a majorly positive redirection in my research. The support available just needs to be known about. Within my questionnaire I asked where people had gained their awareness on the subject. **(Appendix 2.ii)** There were a lot of responses including at training institutions and social media. This contradicts the little knowledge that people claim to have and leads to the question, what are they being taught and told? What needs to change to reduce the ill mental health among performers? Is this just an internal problem within the industry or something that we need to look at from a more universal perspective?

Although the main aim of my research project was to raise awareness and explore more opportunities for heightened awareness and protection of mental health within the performance industry, this won't fix the problem. A major problem that still exists is the effect of the stigma attached to mental health. In my primary research, I asked if people knew of examples of places outside of the industry to get support if they

needed it. **(Appendix 2.v)** Although I got many responses and ideas, when I then asked if people would feel comfortable going to seek this help, only 56% said that they would. **(Appendix 2.vi)** This leads me to believe that the next area of research needs to be in how to reduce the stigma and create a more conducive atmosphere for people to feel that it is okay to seek and receive the help available.

We stated that mental health must have equal priority with physical health, that discrimination associated with mental health problems must end and that everyone who needs mental health care should get the right support, at the right time. (Department of Health and Social Care, 2014)

Asking for help with mental health should be as simple as going to the doctor for a sore throat. This is a problem that needs to be addressed worldwide inside and outside of the performance industry.

Whether an illness affects your heart, your leg or your brain, it's still an illness, and there should be no distinction. (Obama, 2015)

7. Appendices

7.1 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire Questions

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire Results

- | | |
|-------|-------------------------|
| 2.i | Question 3 and Results |
| 2.ii | Question 5 and Results |
| 2.iii | Question 6 and Results |
| 2.iv | Question 8 and Results |
| 2.v | Question 9 and Results |
| 2.vi | Question 10 and Results |

Appendix 3 - Transcript of Part Practical (Section 1)

Appendix 4 - Transcript of Part Practical (Section 2)

Appendix 5 - Transcript of Part Practical (Section 3)

Appendix 6 - Audience Feedback for Part Practical Performance

7.2 Appendix 1

Questionnaire Questions

Q1 Drawing on your own knowledge, how much *more* common do you think issues of mental health are within the performance industry compared to other industries?

Q2 Drama therapy is proved to have excellent results in helping those with mental illnesses. With this in mind, do you believe that the industry is the cause of the high rates of problems or that people with pre-existing issues come into the industry because they see it as a refuge or therapy?

Q3 In your own experience within the performance industry, training or working, have you ever suffered with a mental health issue, including long-term stress? If the answer is yes do you think that it was caused by your involvement in the industry or your involvement is an escape from the issue in everyday life?

Q4 How aware do you think you are about the state of mental health within the industry?

Q5 From where did you gain this awareness?

Q6 Do you think any of these places *should* do more to raise awareness? How?

Q7 If more help and support were given in training institutions such as drama schools, do you think this would undermine the harsh teaching styles used?

Q8 Of these organisations available to specifically help those within the performance industry with their mental health, how many have you heard of or are familiar with?

Q9 Do you know where you could go if you felt you needed help with your mental health? Give examples.

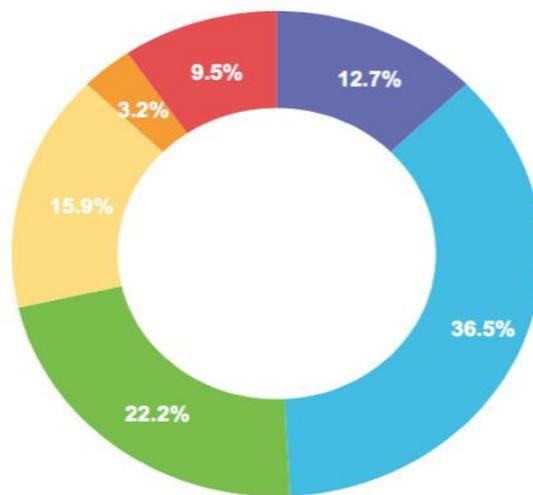
Q10 Would you feel comfortable going to one of these sources if you felt you needed to?

7.3 Appendix 2.i

Q3

MULTIPLE CHOICE

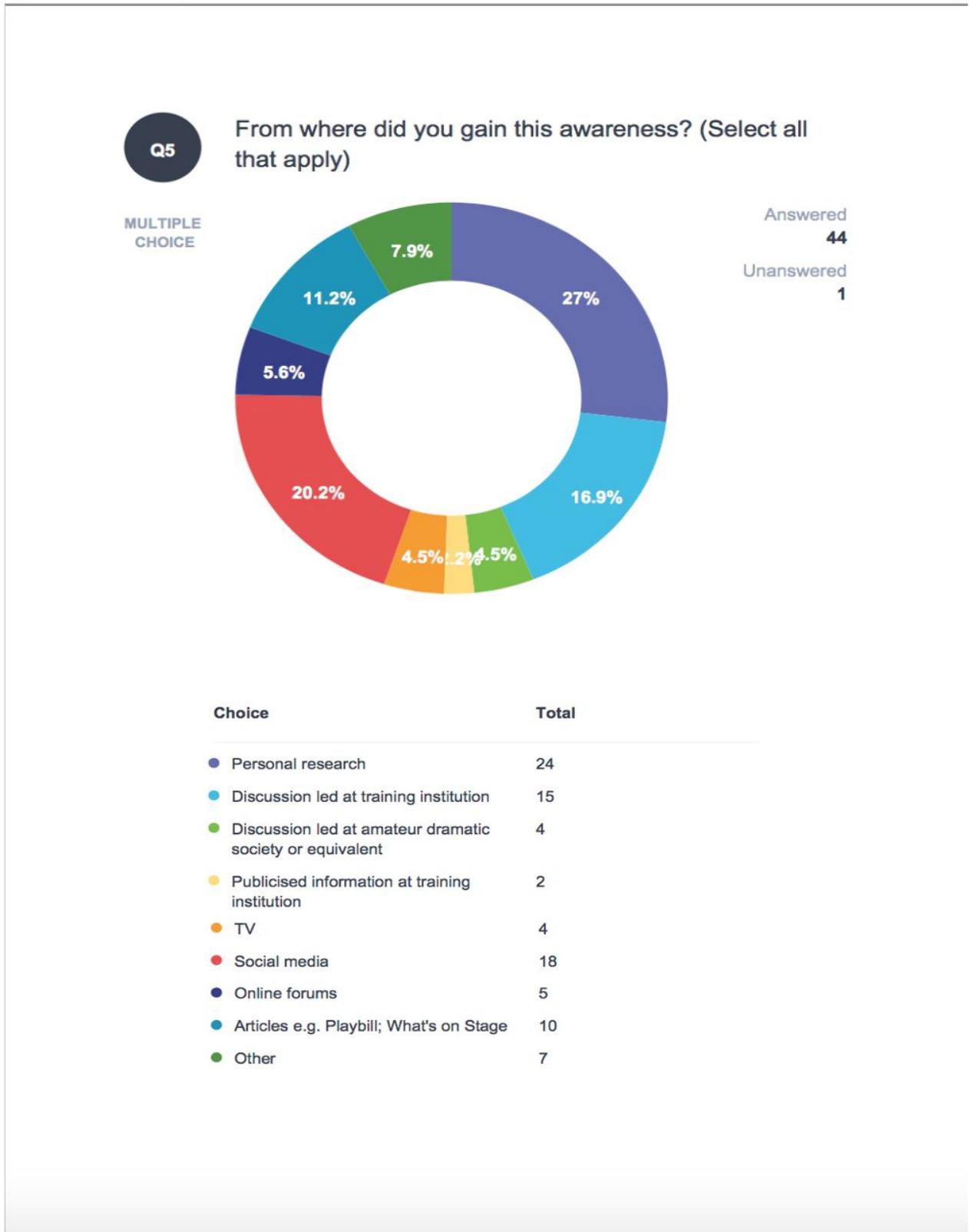
In your own experience within the performance industry, training or working, have you ever suffered with a mental health issue, including long-term stress? If the answer is yes do you think that it was caused by your involvement in the industry or your involvement is an escape from the issue in everyday life? (Select all that apply)



Answered **45**
Unanswered **0**

Choice	Total
● No, I haven't	8
● Yes, I have	23
● I believe my issues to have been caused by my involvement	14
● I take part in performing arts to help me get away from issues I have with my mental health	10
● Prefer not to say	2
● Other	6

7.3 Appendix 2.ii

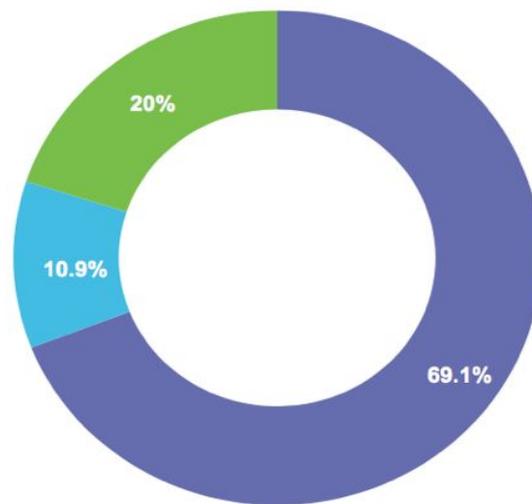


7.3 Appendix 2.iii

Q6

Do you think any of these places **should** do more to raise awareness? How?

MULTIPLE CHOICE



Answered
45
Unanswered
0

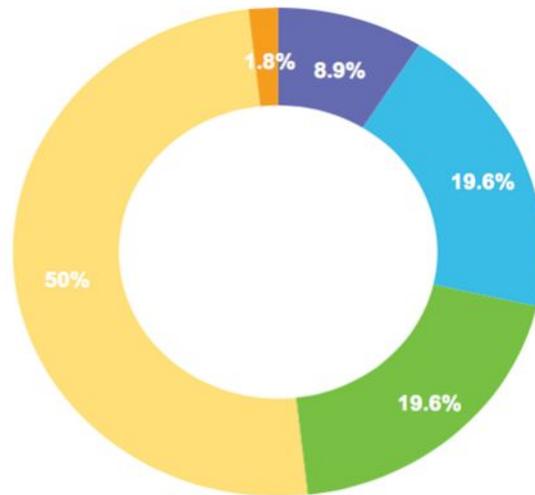
Choice	Total
● Yes, I'd like to have more information	38
● No, I think it is adequate	6
● Please give details	11

7.3 Appendix 2.iv

Q8

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Of these organisations available to specifically help those within the performance industry with their mental health, how many have you heard of or are familiar with?



Answered
45
Unanswered
0

Choice	Total
British Association of Performing Arts Medicine	5
Time for Change - Mental Health Charter	11
Arts Minds	11
None on the above	28
Other	1

7.3 Appendix 2.v



Do you know where you could go if you felt you needed help with your mental health? Give examples.

ESSAY

April 17, 2018 3:38 PM

The doctors
A lecture
Counsellor

April 16, 2018 8:49 PM

NHS
Therapists/councillors
Trusted confidants

April 16, 2018 7:45 PM

Off the Record
Tutor
Friend
Teacher
Parent
Sibling
Family
Doctors

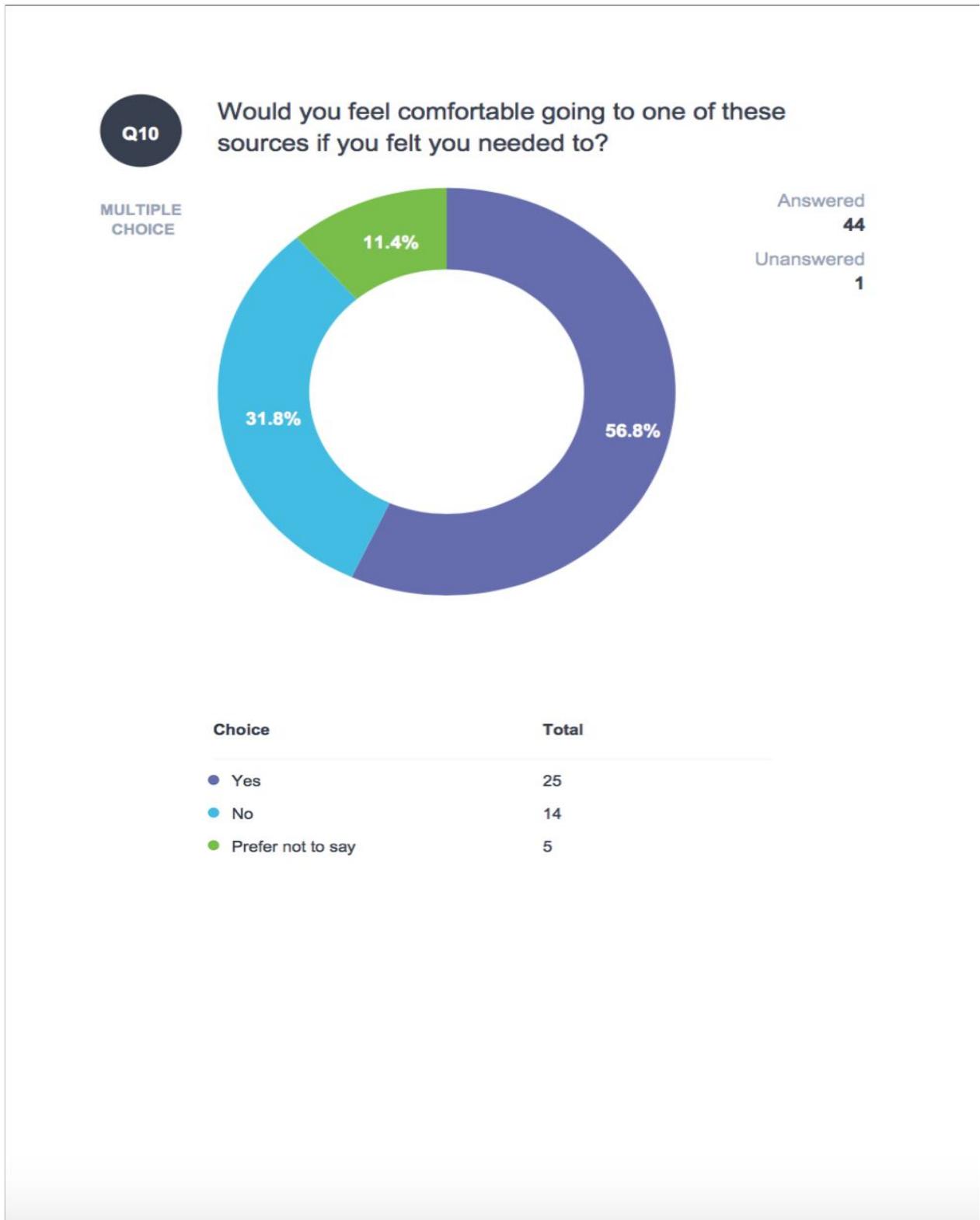
April 16, 2018 7:41 PM

The doctor
Childline

April 16, 2018 7:38 PM

No

7.3 Appendix 2.vi



7.4 Appendix 3

Part Practical Section 1 - Dramatised Speech

(black - recorded voice over)

(blue - live speech)

I've always wanted to do this.

This has always been my dream.

I'm doing what I love.

I did it...I guess.

Is it entirely what I expected?

No, I suppose not.

I know we're taught that a life in this industry is not easy.

I knew it wouldn't be all fun and games.

I just didn't know it would be this lonely.

I didn't know the cycle of rejection and inadequacy would have such an effect on my personal relationships.

I cannot live solely on work from this industry so I have to work other jobs.

This leaves no time to relax or be with friends and family.

Occasionally, I do get to do what I love.

But when I do get a job...it's for "experience".

So maybe I haven't done it.

I'm not a professional.

I'm not worth getting paid.

I can't get out of this cycle.

"If it's so horrible why don't you just get out and do something you can live off?"

I'm doing what I love aren't I?

What I love to do?

I should count myself as lucky.

How dare I complain?

So I don't.

I don't say anything to anyone.

If I continue to complain, I'm scared I will lose my family and friends.

They just don't understand why I would put myself through this.

But I'm doing what I love.

I keep my struggles to myself.

I start to question my abilities.

"Why didn't I get that job?"

The way I spoke?

The way I look?

The way I acted?

Maybe I just don't have the talent.

Maybe I just don't fit in.

Maybe...maybe they knew.

Maybe they thought I don't love what I do.

7.5 Appendix 4

Part Practical Section 2 - TED Talk

This isn't all. This is only a tiny part of the problems going on in the mental health of practitioners of the Performance Industry. The performance industry is the most abundant industry for poor mental health. A world that is an escape for so many is harming its own workers. There has been research carried out by the University of Australia that explores the connections between different sectors of the industry and mental health. These include issues such as depression, anxiety, body dysmorphia, substance abuse, self harm and suicide.

When I was studying at college, I had to do an entire module on 'The Healthy Performer'. It spoke about healthy eating and physical fitness. It didn't touch on mental health. There are many sources of support for those suffering with ill mental health. However, in the Performance Industry we have a unique relationship between our chosen field and our mental health.

Imagine you go to someone for advice and say "I am working a job that I believe to be causing me depression. I am body conscious, my self worth is completely tied up in my success or failure on each individual day, I am in competition with all my colleagues, I have to work unsociable hours, I have no job security and it doesn't pay enough to provide a living." You would be told "get out of there. It isn't healthy. Why on earth are you staying?". Our reply is simple. "I'm doing what I love."

This is why it is so important to have specialised help from those within our industry. That help is out there we just don't know where to find it. Throughout my time studying drama and the arts, I was never given advice for how to care for my mental health or where to go if I felt I need help once I enter the industry. Keeping problems to yourself is detrimental to your health. If we don't know where to go for help we have very little hope for cure.

The help is out there. There are organisations available specifically to support those within this industry. These include Arts Minds, the British Association of Performing Arts Medicine and Time4Change. All of these offer guidance and support.

Time4Change has created a charter for change. This is an action plan of ways to improve the mental health of performers.

What I would like to question is whether we feel that this is a topic that could be aided by early awareness. Could mental health become part of the 'Healthy Performer' curriculum? Might we see an improvement on the rates of mental health if before it affects us we are taught how to care for it and where to go to seek further support? We needn't ever feel like there is no one to talk to or that we are alone.

7.6 Appendix 5

Part Practical Section 3 - Song Performance

Within the genre of musical theatre itself there are shows and songs, perhaps even anthems of hope for those suffering with mental difficulties and feeling alone and lost. In the musical, Dear Evan Hansen, there is a song called You Will Be Found. It is a speech made by the title character who without meaning to reaches and helps thousands of people. It talks not only of the feeling of loneliness and hopelessness but also about the truth that “there is help out there”. One of the other key themes of the song is that if, given enough publicity, so many more people could be reached and helped.

***You Will Be Found** - with middle giving information about the performer’s mental health charities*

BAPAM is a unique non-profit health care organisation providing specialist health support to performing arts professionals and students, throughout the UK.

We can help you whether you are a musician, actor, dancer, singer, stage technician, sound engineer, DJ or variety artist. Sometimes performers have found or been given inaccurate information. Our doctors are experienced at assessing performing artists and can help with an accurate diagnosis and advice.

Psychological Self-Care, Managing performance anxiety (stage fright), Choosing a Psychotherapist or Counsellor

ArtsMinds

ArtsMinds is a collaboration between BAPAM, Equity, The Stage and Spotlight – four entertainment industry organisations that between us reach thousands and thousands of performers and creative practitioners working across all art forms. The trigger for the project came with a series of suicides from within our community which resulted in a call for some kind of action. The four of us came together to consider

how we might support people in our creative industries who are dealing with emotional stress and mental health challenges and the result is this resource hub. We also hope ArtsMinds will encourage more people to talk about their situations and go some way to help raise awareness.

Time for Change

We intend using the collective potency of educational and training institutions, theatres, producers and agencies to make the performing arts inclusive for all, reduce morbidity, promote mental health and well being and remove the pervasive, culturally constructed stigma that surrounds issues of mental health.

Often Performers do not want to speak up about mental health issues as they've spent so long growing that "thick skin" and making themselves indispensable. What we need to be able to understand is that mental health is just as important an issue to address as injuries and physical illnesses. If it's affecting our performance, place within a company and well being we need to be able to talk about it and receive the help that we need.

This is why the problem of mental health within the industry needs to be spoken out about. It needs to have a voice and be shared among those who need support. The support is out there but at the moment the sufferer is the one who has to do the finding and searching rather than 'being found'.

Hopefully with development and more effort, the industry might take on some of the ideas of these charities and implement Mental Health into the foundation of care for performers.

7.7 Appendix 6

Audience Feedback for Part Practical Performance

Q1

ESSAY

Thinking back on my part practical, what effect did it have on you personally? What do you think you benefited from it, if anything? Do you think it was a good representation of the topic? “Mental health in the performance industry: methods of prevention and support” The performance was made of 3 sections: the dramatised audition, the TED talk and the song with readings from online sources

- I think it was different from a lot of the others and therefore interesting. Because although it talked about mental health, it came from a different angle of asking why we aren't getting help. It was very informative about companies that do offer help. And I thought the song choice was very in keeping with the genre of the piece. It allowed the audience to realise that we should not be suffering alone.
- The thing that really hit home for me was the contrast of 'you will be found' with the readings talking about how no one gets found they have to look for help themselves. Think this is very true to how mental health is treated and how backwards it is. I think it represented the topic well and very much showed how it has got better but still more needs to be done about being able to get help
- For me personally your part practical has a very positive effect, in the sense that you hear everywhere about the negative sides of mental illness and all situations within the musical theatre industry that can be problematic for somebody's mental health, however your part practical showed that there are places within our industry that are beneficial for someone facing mental health problems and have created a platform for people to get the necessary help that they need.
- The dramatised audition section was an effective way of showing how confidence can be lost so quickly in this cut-throat industry which catapults people into a rapidly declining state of mental health. The TED complimented this section as instead of only dwelling on the negatives; it brought to light the positive steps being taken to reduce the trauma experienced in the performing arts industry, and it informed us of where to seek help if needed.
- It really opened my eyes and made me frustrated that I hadn't been told about these services before. Of course the information is there if you look for it but I think most people with mental health problems suffer in silence and need to be told about help services. Performing arts schools and jobs need to do more to ensure people know and are

advised about mental health help. It was done so well and I definitely think you could take it further as a project, to take into drama schools etc. It was interesting, emotional, informative and well written/spoken.

- I thought your part practical was a good way of telling your audience the help they could receive and prevention of mental health in our industry. Especially when you mentioned the healthy performer module in your A-levels, and how mental health isn't included in an industry where it's so prominent. I feel your message was successful and many schools/colleges/universities would learn from your subject and it's message.
- I found your part practical very helpful and insightful. Even though I knew how bad mental health could be in the industry, I was made even more aware of it and learnt about places where help could be found for anyone going through it. I found the song suited the subject very well and the ted talk and facts throughout were very useful. The way you showed it made me want to keep listening and understand the subject further.

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