

Participative...
...Transformative
...Integrative

**What makes sociodrama work
as a methodology for
owning our own racism and moving beyond it
– as a step towards reconciliation
between white Australians
and Aboriginal People?**

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This thesis has been completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements toward certification as a practitioner by the Board of Examiners of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association Incorporated. It represents a considerable body of work undertaken with extensive supervision. This knowledge and insight has been gained through hundreds of hours of experience, study and reflection.

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the questions: How can sociodrama be used to enable people to own their own racism and move beyond it and so advance the process of reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal People? And: What can we learn about the sociodramatic method by its application in this area? It describes one of a series of workshops in Australia, on understanding racism and moving beyond it. The design of the workshop is based on the need for a transformative approach to education which is significantly deepened by the application of Morenian methods, using sociodrama in particular. A detailed description is given of what happens in the workshop and reflection on this process yields useful principles and practices for the sociodramatist, particularly in the area of relationships between white Australians and Aboriginal People. This study affirms that Morenian theory and method as practised in sociodrama, is effective in enabling people to own their own racism and move beyond it and so advance the process of reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal People.

Preface

My path to sociodrama

By a happy synchronicity my introduction to *psychodrama* coincided with my involvement in social justice education and an increasing understanding of *structural injustice*.

In this work I had been inspired by the power of the Pastoral Circle - sometimes referred to as the Theological Reflection Process - and saw how social analysis was an effective phase within a broader learning experience.

I was significantly influenced by Holland and Henriot's definition of social analysis as:

"..the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships. Social analysis serves as a tool that permits us to grasp the reality with which we are dealing." (Holland & Henriot 1986:14).

My experience in this work showed me time and again that social analysis brought to light underlying causes of problems, and that action taken based on this analysis was more likely to bring about change than action based on a superficial perception of a problem.

However I found that while I worked with this process quite productively, I could see a need for something that had better group dynamics, was more involving of participants and that allowed for possible 'solutions' to be explored. The discovery of psychodrama showed me a way to fill those gaps.

My first steps into the world of psychodrama were via an experience of Playback Theatre. The Playback theatre group ran a two-day workshop as part of a course I was doing in Melbourne in 1984. As well as enjoying the fun of 'serious play' I was impressed with the way in which the leaders co-facilitated the session. Having developed an interest in adult education I saw the possibilities for using action methods in this area.

When I came to Sydney to work the following year I tracked down Playback Theatre at the Drama Action Centre. Over the next four years I did a range of courses at the Drama Action Centre including mask, storytelling, mime, improvisation, singing,

clowning and playback theatre. So began my learning about ‘action methods’ and the importance of warm up and group process.

Using Action Methods in Social Justice Education

During this time I was working as a team member on the *National Mission, Justice and Development Education Programme*. This programme was designed to educate adults about new understandings of ‘mission’, ‘justice’ and ‘development’ and the connections between all three. Underpinning this new understanding was an understanding of ‘structural injustice’.

Much of the work we did was with school staff. One of the sessions was to enable participants to understand different ‘Orientations to Justice’ [in the] typical ideologies operating in our world: Liberal/ Capitalist and Socialist/ Structural’, and to enable them to draw on the best of both in a way that was transformative. That is, to respect both the individual and the common good. (Mission Justice and Development Education Programme Support Statement No. 3 p29-34).

Using what I had learnt at Drama Action I introduced a way of doing this in action, using the ‘empty chair’ to warm the ‘principal’ up to their role and to then have them set out their school system according to the criteria named above. This process was far more engaging, often fun, and, what I later learnt to be concretisation, made the system visible and therefore able to be worked with.

I recognised the effectiveness of action methods and could also see the impact it could have on people. I could see that it *did* work but was concerned that to use it responsibly I needed to understand more about *why* it worked. I expressed this concern to Bridget Brandon, the Director of the Drama Action Centre, who suggested I do training in Psychodrama.

Psychodrama Training

Psychodrama training provided an understanding of group work that had been missing. Skills in group work enabled safety to be built in the group so that participants were able to enter the work at a feeling level, not just at an intellectual level.

Because my training and experience is in education I was drawn to sociodrama. Firstly because it deals with social issues, that is, issues that are in the public arena and as an educator I believe I only have a mandate to work in this arena, not to engage in therapy. Secondly I saw the possibility for enlivening the exploration of social systems and the possibility of ‘playing’ with possible solutions.

The following year (1990) I did the ten week Practicum at the Wasley Centre in Perth. There, as well as receiving a grounding in psychodrama, I experienced several sociodramas under the direction of Warren Parry and Trish Williams.

I was excited by the potential for using sociodrama in understanding and addressing social issues.

When 1993 was declared the *UN International Year of Indigenous People*, the leaders of the Sisters of Mercy decided that their focus for the year would be to build better relationships with Indigenous Australians by specifically addressing the racism that exists in all of us as white Australians.

My role in the organisation at that time as Social Justice Co-ordinator, meant that I was responsible for implementing this decision. One way of doing this was to conduct a series of workshops on understanding racism using sociodrama as an essential part of the workshop process.

This was also in the time of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1991-2001) whose main task was to improve relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the wider Australian community. So this work was also seen as part of this broader task of reconciliation.

This thesis contains my learnings about prejudice and racism, the insights of various approaches to transformative education and learnings from my training and experience of the psychodramatic method – particularly sociodrama.

I am particularly grateful to Brigid Brandon for setting me on the path of learning in psychodrama and to Rollo Browne for his insightful supervision of this thesis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis addresses two related questions:

How can sociodrama be used to enable people to own their own racism and move beyond it and so advance the process of reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal People? And:

What can we learn about the sociodramatic method by its application in this area?

Addressing racism as a step to furthering reconciliation matters because:

- The continuing economic and social disadvantage of Indigenous Australians is the single most unaddressed social issue in Australia.
- Relations based on white superiority are at the root of this.
- All Australian citizens have a responsibility to build healthy relationships, based on a true understanding of our shared history and respect for cultural differences.
- There has been a void in leadership which can relate simultaneously to both black and white people in their truth: to hold white fears and dignity at the same time as recognising black reality and honouring black dignity.

Articulating what makes sociodrama work as a methodology in this area is important because it increases my conscious competence and it contributes to the developing theory and practice of sociodrama.

Background: The Reconciliation Workshops

As part of their work in reconciliation, the Sisters of Mercy made a commitment to ‘investigating a process of education’ relating to racism in Australia. To implement this decision, I conducted a series of workshops in Perth, Townsville, Melbourne, Goulburn, Parkes and Adelaide for members of Mercy congregations and colleagues involved in cross cultural work and others who were interested in working for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Participants were all white Australians willing to work on the responsibilities of Non-Aboriginal People to work for reconciliation, by “*Owning Our Own Racism and Moving Beyond it*” – the title of the workshops.

This thesis flows from the work done in those workshops. There are 5 chapters: Ch 1 is the introduction to the topic; Ch 2 presents literature on racism education, transformative education and Morenian theory and practice; Ch 3 describes one of the workshops in detail; Ch 4 contains selected moments from the workshop and reflections on these from which are drawn, the principles and practices that guided me as the director of the sociodrama; Ch 5 presents implications for practitioners and Ch 6 is the conclusion which summarises the work.

Chapter 2

Locating Sociodrama in the Literature on Racism Education and the Contribution of Morenian Theory

Overview

This chapter begins with the distinctions between prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, ethnocentrism, racism, and between individual racism and institutional racism before considering the practice of educating about racism in Australia. This is followed by a section on transformative learning processes. It is here that the work of Dr J.L. Moreno contributes to our understanding of how we might deepen transformative processes in education about racism.

Prejudice, Stereotyping, Discrimination Ethnocentrism and Racism

Educational approaches to prejudice essentially depend on how racism is seen and understood. This includes understanding the development of racism as a social construct and its pervasiveness in individual and institutional racism in Australian colonial history.

- Prejudice is literally pre-judging, making an evaluation of someone without adequate information.
- Stereotyping is a key component of prejudice. Stereotypes create generalised images which give a distorted picture of people in a particular group.
- Discrimination refers to behaviour which disadvantages people on the basis of this inadequate information.
- Ethnocentrism is based on cultural differences and a belief that my culture is superior.
- Racism is based on a belief about biological superiority.

(Chambers & Pettman 1986, Shields 1986, McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1989, Kivel 2002, Ryde 2009).

While physical differences do exist among human beings and can act as a trigger to 'racism', race as a biological concept has been thoroughly discredited. However, the demise of racism as a scientific 'fact' has not eradicated it as a social and political reality.

Understanding these concepts is important for both the person conducting the education programme to refine their purpose and strategies and for participants in the education programme to become aware of the type of prejudice in which they may be engaged so that appropriate change can be effected.

Individual and Institutional Racism

Racism manifests as individual racism and as institutional racism. McConnochie et al point out that the extent to which most people exhibit racist behaviour is more closely related to the mores, values and institutions of the society than to underlying personality structures (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1989).

Institutional racism is embedded in social institutions such as laws, policies and practices, decision-making processes and distribution of public resources. It allows for power and resources to be directed to the dominant group while denying the minority group basic freedoms and equality (ibid).

As Kivel points out:

“..as long as we focus only on individual actions and ignore community and organizational responses, we will leave the system of racism intact.” (Kivel 2002:3).

Racial laws and policies impinge daily on the lives of those discriminated against, but are usually invisible to members of the dominant group. Because it is harder to recognise, institutional racism is also more difficult to eradicate.

Perhaps because it is much harder to achieve structural change, most effort in adult education on racism in Australia has gone into educational programs which address individual racism and try to build relationships across differences. Many such programmes were conducted under the auspices of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Another well known programme which focused on changing individual attitudes was the Racism Awareness Workshops conducted by *Action for World Development*. This programme insisted on Indigenous people being present to monitor the process, particularly the presentation of colonial history. This approach is questioned by Consedine & Consedine (2001) in New Zealand, who assert that both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people need a safe and non-confrontational environment to address issues relating to colonisation and identity.

Effective Learning: Participative, Integrative, Transformative

The well known anti-racism educator, Jane Elliott, created a learning experience which shatters old frameworks and questions assumptions. At first glance this aligns with the principles of transformative education. Her ‘*Brown Eyes Blue Eyes*’ workshops were based on her well publicised experiment in schools in 1968 and were later developed for corporations in USA. In this she was a forerunner of corporate diversity training.

However, there are major ethical issues regarding her work, in that participants are not asked if they agree to enter into an experiential process where one subgroup is privileged over another, solely based on physical characteristics such as eye colour. Her approach is deliberately confrontational and while offering some useful insights and tools, in her workshops in Australia she showed little understanding of the Australian context (personal workshop notes 1998). To bring about lasting change, education needs to include an element of respect for the experience of participants in the change process, so that it is co-created not imposed, that is, it is truly participative.

Nor will information alone be enough to bring about change in social issues such as race relations. We need to go beyond the dualistic thinking that stereotypes others and separates people into ‘either or’ categories. Educating about prejudice and racism is, at its heart, an integrative process in adults.

Shields in his book on overcoming prejudice, cites Dewey as someone who did this in a form of education that kept thought integrated with action, and intelligence connected to primary experience (Shields 1986).

This is similar to Mezirow’s framework for Transformative Learning which is based on:

“The process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of one’s experience. Learning includes acting on these insights.” (Mezirow 1990).

While transformative learning is not focused specifically on addressing prejudice, it does challenge old frameworks of thinking as an individual becomes aware of holding a limiting or distorted view. When the person critically examines these views they open themselves to alternatives and consequently change the way they see things;

they transform some part of how they make meaning in the world. (Mezirow 1991, 1997, 2000).

O'Sullivan describes transformative learning as:

“ experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world.” (O'Sullivan 2003).

There is a large literature on transformative processes in adult education, including Friere (1972, 1985), Kolb (1984), Reason and Bradbury (2001), Taylor (1998), Brookfield (1987), Agyris (1999), David Boud (1991), Michael Newman (1994, 2006) and Griff Foley (1995).

For the purpose of this work, the essence of transformative education is understood as learning which moves the person into action and changed behaviour as a result of their insights and changed perspective.

Deepening Transformative Processes by Linking to Values

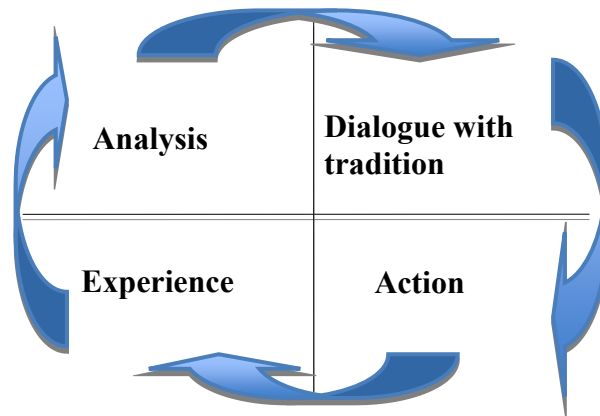
Other writers have focused on the essential role of values in change and transformation. Collins & Chippendale emphasise that people will only be motivated to engage in processes and activities when those processes and activities are congruent with their values (1995:169).

Calling on people's values in work for social change is also basic to the work of liberation theologians. Originating in Latin America where they were influenced by the work of Friere, they take this further to enable faith-based change agents to deepen their practice in the world. They do this by using a process which links experience with an analysis of the situation and action based on profoundly held values. Early writers in this field were Gutierrez (1973), Segundo (1976), and Boff (1987).

Liberation theology was subsequently taken up in developed countries and applied to social justice education and action by writers such as Holland & Henriot (1983), Dorr (1984), Berryman (1987), Darragh (1995), Schreiter (1985), Nelson-Pallmeyer (1986), O'Connell Killen and de Beer (1996), Wijzen, Henriot & Mejia (2005). A key principle of Liberation Theology is that it is a model of praxis where theory informs practice and practice informs theory.

This process called the Pastoral Circle (or Theological Reflection Process) has become an influential framework in many parts of the world and provides the structure of many faith-based social change processes. It begins with people's *Experience*, moves to *Analysis* of the situation, then places the critical questions generated in this phase in *Dialogue* with the faith or values of the people and this leads to *Action* on the issues being worked with.

Diagram 1: The Pastoral Circle



The Pastoral Circle provides a process that is participative in co-creation of the learning event, integrative in bringing thinking and action together and relating to core values, and transformative in that it leads to changed behaviour. Sociodrama on its own can also achieve this effect; using them together provides a potent anti-racism education process, especially where there is an existing value system on which to build.

Transformative Action Methods – the work of Dr J.L. Moreno

Over his lifetime Dr J.L. Moreno (1889 – 1974) developed theories and applications in the fields of mental health and human development (psychodrama), interpersonal relations (sociometry) and social systems (sociodrama). Most of his methods were used in group settings and consequently his approaches necessarily involved group work and skills in group leadership.

Moreno did not use the language of ‘transformative education’ but the theory and techniques he developed are uniquely participative, integrative and transformative. In this, not only was he ahead of his time but his methods provide an effective methodology for work with current social issues such as racism as it impinges on reconciliation.

The aspects of Moreno's work that are most relevant as a methodology in this area include:

- i Spontaneity, Creativity and the 'here and now'.
- ii Morenian Group Work
 - *making the work participative*
- iii Spontaneity Theory of Learning
 - *making the work integrative*
- iv Sociodrama as a method of social change
 - *making the work transformative*

i) Spontaneity, creativity and the 'here and now'

Creativity and spontaneity are the philosophical underpinning of Moreno's work. He saw human beings as creators who are diminished when they lose their ability to be creative and to be present in the here-and-now.

"The present moment is a powerful category in Moreno's psychology and philosophy. It is an existential idea, a deep appreciation for the sense of creative potential. In becoming more aware of the here-and-now (a term Moreno invented around 1914) individuals are helped to engage more authentically in activities that increase their sense of being alive." (Blatner & Blatner 1988:85).

Spontaneity is a catalyst for creativity and it operates in the moment, in the here-and-now.

"Spontaneity operates in the present, now and here; it propels the individual towards an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation." (Moreno 1953:13).

Kate Bradshaw Tauvon adds an insight into what this adequate response looks like:

"An adequate new response requires a sense of timing, a sense of appropriateness and autonomy." (1998:31).

Attending to the moment, the 'here and now', deepens the work. This is achieved by the warm up and throughout the enactment by the director continuing to speak in the present tense reinforcing the protagonist's immersion in the 'here-and-now' (Blatner & Blatner 1988:61). The director also ensures that the auxiliaries speak in the present tense and draw the protagonist into the interaction as if it was for the first time (Blatner & Blatner 1988:19). The effect is to make the drama real.

“The painstaking effort to warm up the protagonist to each moment is for the purpose of making the protagonist’s drama become a real drama. It is not a make believe drama, or a fantasy. It is a drama which portrays life itself as far as this is possible to achieve. The emphasis is not so much on the finished product, it is on the process of warming up to the moment.” (Clayton 1991:31).

Working with the ‘here-and-now’ is especially important in sociodrama because it is easy, when dealing with social issues, to skip the personal warm up of the participants and go straight to the social issues. From experience, I know that this approach does not lead to effective sociodramas.

Browne articulates the same insight.

“If the director works only at the level of social roles this will create a tendency to stay stereotyped and superficial. From such enactments we don’t get much learning, we just get performance. Social and personal roles already co-exist and the director sustains a parallel warm up that is both personally and socially focused.” (Browne 2005:17).

Ironically, attending deeply to the present moment, creates access to the past and to the future. A group well warmed up to the present moment, will find ways through the drama, to integrate the present, the past and the future.

“Psychodrama can enact scenes or amplify experiences in all three periods. By replaying the past in the present, all of the resources of the intervening time and surrounding social supports become available, and the individual is helped to become liberated from the fixated attitudes and emotions associated with traumatic memories.” (Blatner & Blatner 1988:85).

Attending to what is present in members of the group here-and-now, shows that the leader respects and values participant’s experience. It also creates a safe container for the work and lays a good foundation for effective group work because it is working with what is present in the group.

ii) Morenian Group Work

Moreno’s methodology (psychodrama, sociodrama, sociometry and role training) are all group methods (Clayton 1989). He invented the term ‘group psychotherapy’ (Marineau 1989) and it is clear that his theories (role theory, spontaneity theory, theory of child development) all contribute to a way of working in groups.

Since Moreno's contributions, group theory has developed considerably, see Bion (1961), Pines (1985), Clayton (1989 & 1994), Agazarian (2004). In this thesis I draw on particular approaches that have augmented Morenian practice and allow the sociodramatist to focus on social change, specifically the Group Focal Conflict Model of Whitaker & Lieberman (1964), Whitaker (1985) and the role of the group leader Clayton (1989 & 1994), Kellerman (2000).

Group Focal Conflict Model

In '*Using Groups to Help People*', Whitaker points out the necessity of having a framework for attending to group functioning so that the group leader is aware of what they are attending to in the group. She observes that:

"..no matter how great one's natural ability, it can be more effectively developed and deployed if one has some ideas in mind about what to attend to as a group session proceeds. (1985:194).

One framework she develops is the *focal conflict* theory of group functioning. In this model the solution to a group concern, the '*disturbing motive*' and the '*reactive fear*' in the group around the presenting situation are identified and brought into awareness. If the group solution only addresses either the disturbing motive or the reactive fear then the solution tends to be restrictive. A solution that includes both is referred to as '*enabling*'. The importance of this model in sociodrama is that when both poles (motive & fear) are attended to, wider explorations are possible (1985:53). This is most relevant in selecting the specific situation to work on and in thinking about the solution the group comes to in their exploration.

Group Leadership

As mentioned above, sociodrama requires effective group leadership. Writing about psychodrama groups Clayton emphasises the need for a group leader to be '*a lover of life*' and someone who can be involved in the group.

"The real work of a group calls for the leader to jump into the middle of the experience of each group member and to carry out their leadership function in such a way that the experience of each individual shines forth like a beacon." (1994:7).

While this may seem wildly open ended, he does go on to articulate attitudes to be developed in the leader and tasks to be undertaken in the group process.

Kellerman in *Psychodrama with Trauma Survivors*, relates leadership styles and functions in a psychodrama group to the healing cycle/cycle of development. He notes how these roles align with the analysis of leadership roles by Lieberman, Yalom and Miles (1973). He names these roles as Caring Leader, Emotional Stimulator, Meaning Attributor and Director (2000:267).

iii) Spontaneity Theory of Learning

In sociodrama it is particularly important to connect thinking and action in the service of social change.

In ‘*Who Shall Survive?*’ Moreno outlines his ‘Spontaneity Theory of Learning’. He describes how the *act centre* and the *content centre* of a person develop separate structures, and trace different paths in the nervous system. He describes content as a ‘dull’ state, and action as a ‘heated state’ which occur at different moments and do not connect to each other. Consequently, content received does not bring about change in behaviour.

“The material learned does not reach the act centre of personality. A shut in memory develops and prevents the integration of the factual knowledge into the active personality of the individual. The knowledge remains undigested, unabsorbed by the personality and hinders its full influence upon his activity and judgement.” (1953:198).

However, he notes that

“in actual life situations the supreme desideratum is exactly this facility of integration.” (ibid).

The key to the integration of the content and the action is learning the content in a warmed up or ‘action’ state as this establishes associations with the learning because the contents enter the mind when the subject is in the behaviour of acting.

“According to spontaneity hypothesis it is assumed that learning with highly warmed up states establishes special associations. Contents of learning which enter the mind connected with highly warmed up states recur more easily with the recurrence of similarly warmed up states.” (1953:199).

Moreno’s approach of integrating thinking and action is highly effective because the learner becomes unified in themselves, is congruent in thought, feeling and action,

and has more access to their spontaneity. Consequently they are more likely to intervene in their social system because,

“... [his] learning becomes essentially connected and integrated with [his] acts, not apart from them.” (1953:200).

Moreno is the only theorist who discusses the application of spontaneity and the ‘heated state’ of warm up necessary for learning that creates action. This is essential in social change because the enormity of social justice issues can often have the effect of paralysing the very people who see the issues and want to be effective change agents. They see the ‘cultural conserve’ but lack the spontaneity that would enable them to see another possibility and act to create it.

iv) Sociodrama as a Method of Social Change

Moreno always saw psychodrama as applying beyond the medical model, in education, spiritual development, politics, the arts and other areas. He believed that it was not enough to address the internal world only. He begins his important work, *Who shall Survive?*, with the statement that:

“A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind.” (1953:3).

Hence, it is not surprising that some of Moreno’s earliest work focused on sociodramatic experiments. These did not all work well.

Marineau notes the failure of Moreno’s first demonstration of sociodrama on the evening of April 1st, 1921 where Moreno attempted to:

“... find new organizational alternatives for Austrian people and to give power to every voice within the social and political spectrum.” (1989:71).

Marineau observes that the failure was due to there being no will on the part of the people to look at other people’s suggestions, that is a lack of readiness to ‘reverse roles’ with others and truly see it from their perspective, or because

“...the neophyte sociodramatist, Moreno, overlooked the difficulty of leading such a big and heterogenous crowd. (ibid).

This observation gives valuable clues to some prerequisites for a successful sociodrama:

- (i) the necessity of a sufficient warm up to roles to enable adequate role reversal.

- (ii) a group that is realistic in size and that allows sufficient sociometric connections and mutuality to develop and,
- (iii) a group that can be unified around some common interest and commitment to the issue being addressed.

Marineau notes that Moreno learnt from this experience and points to the development of his thinking on sociodrama in *'Who Shall Survive?'* where he asserts that:

"Sociodrama has been defined as a deep action method dealing with intergroup relations and collective ideologies." (1953:59).

Now more aware of the role of group leadership, he describes the sociodramatist as:

"...trying to bring the masses to a maximum of group realization, group expression, and group analysis." (1953:89).

The concept underlying this approach is that:

"..every man is a roleplayer... and that every culture is characterised by a certain set of roles which it imposes with a varying degree of success upon its membership." (1953:60).

However, observation and analysis of the differing roles, is on its own, insufficient to bring about change. For this to happen the differences in cultures need to be made visible and a way found for the different realities to interact.

"The problem is how to bring a cultural order to view by dramatic methods. Even if full information could be attained by observation and analysis, it has become certain that observation and analysis are inadequate tools for exploring the more sophisticated aspects of inter-cultural relations and that deep action methods are indispensable." (ibid).

Moreno moves on from thinking he can work with 'the masses' to asserting that in working for social change a smaller more focused group is more effective.

"...only the individuals involved in a social issue are present." (1953:88).

He emphasises that the issues and production and solutions must come from the group.

"The choice of the social issue and the decision of the implementation come from the group and not from a particular leader." (ibid).

and

“The sociodrama, however, starts from within the audience present, it is calculated to serve as a stimulus to spontaneity, creativity, love and empathy, and as check and balance to cultural tensions and hostilities.” (ibid).

In ‘*Who Shall Survive?*’ in the section titled ‘The Sociometric Concept of Social Change’, Moreno outlines the four chief references for this concept:

“a) the spontaneity-creativity potential of the group, b) the parts of the universal sociometric matrix relevant to its dynamics, c) the system of values it tries to overcome and abandon and d) the system of values it aspires to bring to fulfilment.” (1953:86).

The principles of sociodrama articulated here by Moreno which still apply in using sociodrama for bringing about social change are:

- The primacy of the group as the source of the issue and the solution.
- The role of the group leader in maximising the potential of the group through accessing their spontaneity.
- The production of the wider sociometry (systems and subgroups through which social forces are expressed) that are relevant to the presenting issue.
- The attention to values: both those to be challenged (cultural conserve) and those to be lived by.
- Moreno’s vision for sociatry, working with inclusion and building sociometric choices all inform sociodramatic practice. See for example, his work with prostitutes in Vienna in 1913, Tyrolean Refugees at Mittendorf in 1915, prisoners at Sing Sing in 1931-2, Hudson School for Girls 1932-38 (Fonseca 2009, Yablonski 1975 pp25-29).

Like psychodrama, sociodrama is a ‘*deep action method*’. (Moreno 1985:352-354) but it differs in that the focus is not the individual but the group or the ‘collective’.

In *Psychodrama Volume I*, Moreno identifies ‘collective roles’ as roles which *“...are lived and experienced in a collective way, and they must be portrayed in a collective way.” (1985:532).*

The writing on sociodrama since Moreno focuses mainly on education and organisational applications of the method and has been produced by practioners for colleagues in their own fields. (Browne 2005:6).

In writing about sociodramatic process in an educational setting Dayton says:

“Essentially it allows groups to come up with roles that are relevant to their setting, explore the collective role, and personalize and deconstruct it in terms of the self through doubling and group sharing.” (2005:141).

In the area of anti-racism education, the methodology of sociodrama is relevant because racism is a social issue. In the sociodramatic process group members become co-explorers into their commonly held experiences of the social forces that underpin racism.

Apart from Kellerman (1998 & 2007) and Ken Sprague (1998) there has been little writing on Moreno’s thinking on using sociodrama to bring about social change that addresses structural injustice. Other writers have outlined the phases and techniques of sociodrama (Clayton, Parry & Williams (1982), Clayton (1982), Sternberg & Garcia (1989), Weiner (1997), Sprague (1998), Browne (2005). Several have written of its applications in various settings: Synnot (1992), Thomson (1997), Williscroft (1998), Hutt (2001), Browne (1999, 2005, 2008) and the reader unfamiliar with these writings is referred to them.

Others have written about working within and across different cultures: Faisandier (1994), Consedine and Consedine (2001), Densley (2004), Howie and Synnot (2007) and Shand and Simpkins (2007).

These writers provide a useful range of applications of sociodrama that convey Moreno’s vision and on which a director can build their own practice of the method. However, it is not easy to find a summary of principles that assist a director to create a satisfying sociodrama. I begin to address this gap in the literature where I reflect in Chapter 4 on the principles that underpin my work as a sociodramatist.

Summary

Education about racism draws on the literature on prejudice and racism for a theoretical description and analysis of the issue. The literature of liberation theology and transformative education provide further ideas and methodologies for addressing racism.

Moreno, and other writers who have developed his ideas, provide further effective insights into approaches to racism, enabling people to reclaim their spontaneity in the face of powerful and systemic cultural conserves, by integrating content and action, and bringing their learning into their own personal and social systems and by

committing to action for change. Revisiting Moreno's writing on sociodrama yields some principles that form the basis of an approach to sociodrama as a transformative social process.

The following chapter describes how this takes place in a particular workshop on owning our racism and moving beyond it as part of the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Australians.

Chapter 3

Sociodrama Addressing Racism and Reconciliation

Description of Work

Context of the work

As mentioned at the end of Chapter 1, I had the task of ‘investigating a process of education’ relating to the inherent racism in white Australians. To do this I planned a series of workshops around Australia on this topic to progress the movement towards reconciliation with Aboriginal Australians.

The following description draws on the experience of these workshops to show how and why sociodrama works effectively in enabling white Australians to take steps beyond our own racism, towards reconciliation with Aboriginal People.

WARM UP

i) Pre workshop:

Prior to the workshop I sent an invitation to leaders of the Mercy Congregations inviting them to host a workshop and include nearby Mercy communities, colleagues and people interested in the issue of reconciliation. The Workshop was titled: ‘*Owning our own racism and moving beyond it.*’

The purpose of the invitation was to warm up participants to the reality of the *restrictive solution* and offer the possibility of “moving beyond” it to an *enabling solution*. The fear is already present in the restrictive solution. The hope is in coming together with people who share a common values base by their association with the Sisters of Mercy and the challenge to reflect together on our own stance and work together to create new steps towards reconciliation.

The intention was to warm them up to the roles of ‘*Willing Relaters*’, ‘*Value-based, Reflective Practitioners*’, ‘*Safe and Open Learners*’, ‘*Effective Change Agents*’ and ‘*Respectful and Collaborative Reconcilers*’.

ii) At the workshop

Participants include a broad range of people: teachers and education administrators and consultants, nurses, social workers, retirees, Sisters of Mercy and members of the Guide Dog association. The latter are present because of the increase in the number of Aboriginal People using their services because of blindness related to diabetes.

Some participants know one another from work or social settings; some do not. All have some affiliation with the Sisters of Mercy or with schools or agencies run by them, so have a shared value base underpinned by compassion and a commitment to social justice.

At the beginning of the day I refer to the invitation which names the workshop as '*Owning our own racism and moving beyond it*'. I note that this may hold some embarrassment and shame about racism in ourselves and it also offers the hope that we can work together and find new ways to move beyond it.

I ask people "*What brings you here?*" and direct them to share this in twos and threes. I observe that some have come from the same organisations, some for similar reasons and some for different reasons.

I observe the readiness of the group to engage in the work in their energy in interactions with one another, delight at meeting friends and colleagues and their welcoming stance to new people. There are healthy connections in the group and a good level of spontaneity. I note roles of *delighted companion, eager explorers* and *attentive, eager to engage group members*. This all contributes to a healthy level of safety in the group.

I continue to build this safety by outlining the process for the day which is structured around The Pastoral Circle. (See Diagram 1, p7)

This process begins with participants experience and I emphasise that, as it *is* each one's own experience it would be heard as that and not judged. We will then move to an analysis of the social forces influencing this issue by means of a sociodrama. I state my fundamental position that that social ills such as racism are not just a personal responsibility but have a social or structural nature which we will explore in the second phase of the process.

The third phase will be reflecting on our questions and insight in the light of the Christian tradition and finally moving to some future actions.

I notice people are a little more relaxed and at ease after hearing the outline for the day especially the assurance that their experience can be shared but will not be judged. I observe that some participants are familiar with the reflection process outlined, and others by nods and positive murmurs indicate a readiness to move forward.

As we move forward I hold a sociodramatic question for this process which is: *‘Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal People, how can we move forward to reconciliation?’*

Stories

Locating the next part of the process in the ‘Experience’ sector of the overall process, I ask participants to think of an instance, in their own experience when they saw racism towards Aboriginal People. They are invited to include not only direct experience but their experience of ‘reported accounts’ eg radio or print, by which they were affected. This was done because I recognised that many Australians have had no direct encounter with Aboriginal People.

Participants share these experiences in pairs.

The stories are then shared in the larger group. They include stories about:

- Hearing on the radio about an Aboriginal actor being pulled up by police and interrogated roughly – apparently because he was black and driving a late model car.
- An Aboriginal woman who told her friend how the person at the checkout never put the change into her hand – always on the counter.
- An Aboriginal woman relating how Aboriginal women in the ‘mission’ where she grew up had to walk fifty kilometres to the hospital when they were due to give birth. They were put in a separate section of the hospital, not with white mothers.
- An Aboriginal man taken from his family, relating how as a little boy in Kinsela Boys Home, he and others were not given shoes and on freezing mornings as they brought the cows in for milking they would stand in the fresh cow dung to warm their feet.
- A woman getting on a bus in Halls Creek WA with three other white Australians and ten Aboriginal People. The bus driver made no apology for being three hours late and arriving in the early hours of the morning.

The Effect of the Stories

During the telling of stories I observe that people are very attentive to and respectful of one another. There is a growing softness in the group, observable in participants’ body language and tone of voice.

After the story telling as some of the stories are shared in the whole group, I perceive roles of '*Relieved Truth Teller*', '*Embarrassed, Sorrowful Witness of Racism*', '*Listening, Non-judgemental Companion*', '*Purposeful Contributor*', '*Anxious Searcher for a better way of Relating [to Aboriginal People]*', '*Open, Curious Learner*', '*Secure Explorer of New possibilities*'. As I notice these roles I feel excitement building in me. With these roles present in the group I decide that the group is ready to move into action.

Movement to action

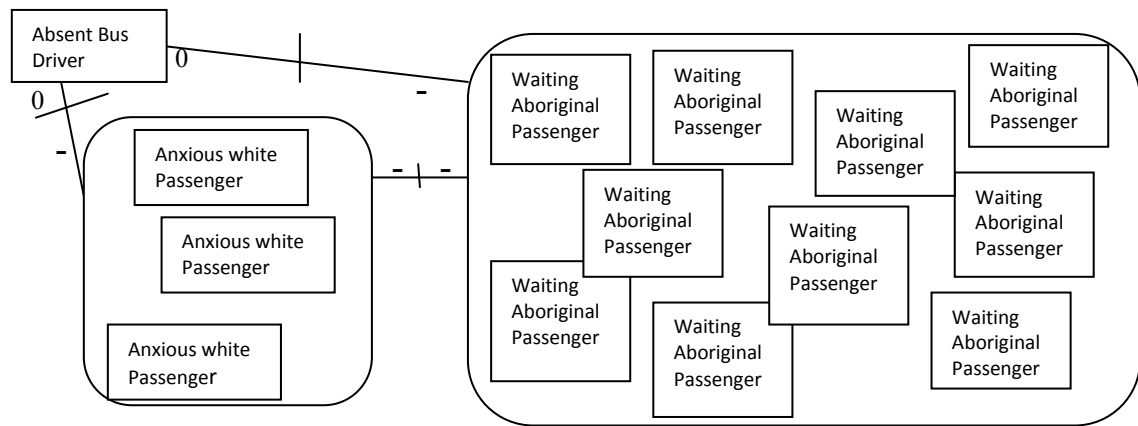
I select the story of the woman getting on the bus in Halls Creek for the enactment. My selection is based on the connection to other stories in the group, the level of affect and the potential for displaying a broader system. The protagonist has the potential to be a good protagonist for the group as she held both the motivating force and the reactive fear in her own being.

I invite Emily to describe the situation.

Emily *I have lived and worked with Aboriginal People in the Kimberley area of Western Australia for many years. On this occasion I was waiting at Halls Creek for a bus that was due at midnight but didn't arrive till 3.00am. Also waiting were two other white Australians and about ten Aborigines. Even though I knew several of the Aborigines, as the waiting time stretched into the early hours of the morning I became increasingly anxious.*

In my mind I develop a sociodramatic image of the white Australians in a group together and the Aboriginal people in another group. This helps me to name the subgroups and get oriented to the role relationships and systems involved. The role relations within each group are generally positive. The usually neutral or positive relations between the two groups shift to negative as a result of the white passengers' increasing anxiety. As the hours pass, the white passengers' anxiety turns to fear. As events later showed the bus driver was neutral to both groups and both groups were negative to him.

Diagram 2: Sociodramatic Image of Passengers at Bus Stop



Legend: o = neutral, + = positive, - = negative.

I invite Emily to step into the action space.

ENACTMENT

Dir: *Emily, step forward. [Emily steps into the stage area.]*

What happened when the bus arrived?

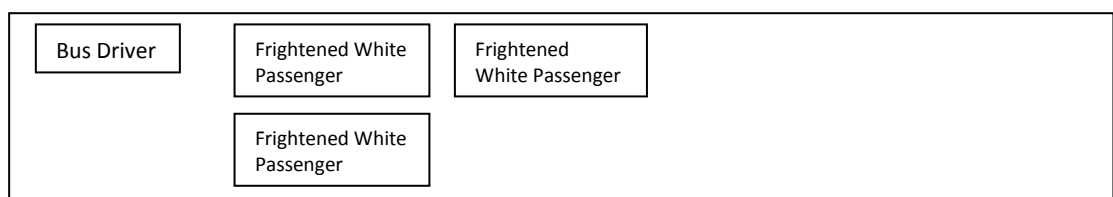
Emily *Well, when the bus finally arrived, almost three hours late, I scurried onto the bus and sat directly behind the driver, for safety. So did the other white passengers. As I settled into my seat I realised I had allowed my fear to overtake me. I knew most of these [Aboriginal] people! I don't usually act like that with them.*

Dir: *What happened next?*

Emily: *When everyone was on the bus we headed off. **But** the bus driver made no apology or explanation for being so late!*

Dir: *Set up the bus. Emily uses chairs to set out the driver's seat and passenger seats.*

Diagram 3: Frightened White Passengers board bus



Dir: Choose someone to be the bus driver.

She does so and the auxiliary who is very warmed up goes directly to the driver's seat.

Dir: To Bus Driver: You look as though you are well acquainted with this job.

Driver: Yeah. Been driving these things for twenty odd years.

Dir: You're running a bit late tonight.

Driver: Yeah! Bus from Darwin was late getting to Kunnunurra.

Dir: I noticed that you gave no explanation or apology to the passengers for arriving so late.

Driver: Yeah, well, most of 'em are 'blackfellas.'

Dir: So, they don't need an explanation or apology?

Driver: No need to apologise. They don't matter.

Dir: When do you think you learnt this approach to Aborigines?

Driver: Oh! Years ago! Me mother always told me never to play with them black kids."

Dir: Why do you think she did that?

Driver: Well, you know. Couldn't be sure of them. Where they'd been, usually a bit dirty. All that stuff.

Dir: Choose someone to be your mother.

An auxiliary is chosen and directed to stand in relationship to her son, the bus driver.

Dir: Thank you for being here. I'm wondering if you can throw some light on this situation. I understand from speaking with

your son that you used to tell him “never to play with black kids”.

Mother: Oh Yes. We all did. All the mothers. You just couldn't trust them. And it probably sounds a bit racist, but they were usually a bit dirty you know. And living on the edge of town.. well that's why the police had to take the children away ... sometimes, The parents couldn't look after them properly.

Dir: Choose someone to be a policeman authorised to take the children away.

She chooses an auxiliary to be the policeman.

Dir: Where is he in relation to you?

Mother: A bit away from me. I didn't really know the police were doing this - taking the children away - at the time, but I knew there were homes for Aboriginal children. They were just doing what they had to do.

Historical Social forces acting on the Bus Driver

Dir: To whole group: We are beginning to see the historical and social forces that were impacting on the mother and through her, on the Bus Driver, in this moment.

We'll continue to build a picture of these historical and social forces acting at this time. As we do I invite you to contribute what you know about these forces. They may be particular people, or groups of people or institutions.

Lets continue building this picture.

So, who or what gave the policeman authority to take Aboriginal children away from their families?

Aux A: The Aboriginal Protection Board.

Dir: Come and be the Aboriginal Protection Board. Place yourself in relationship to the policeman.

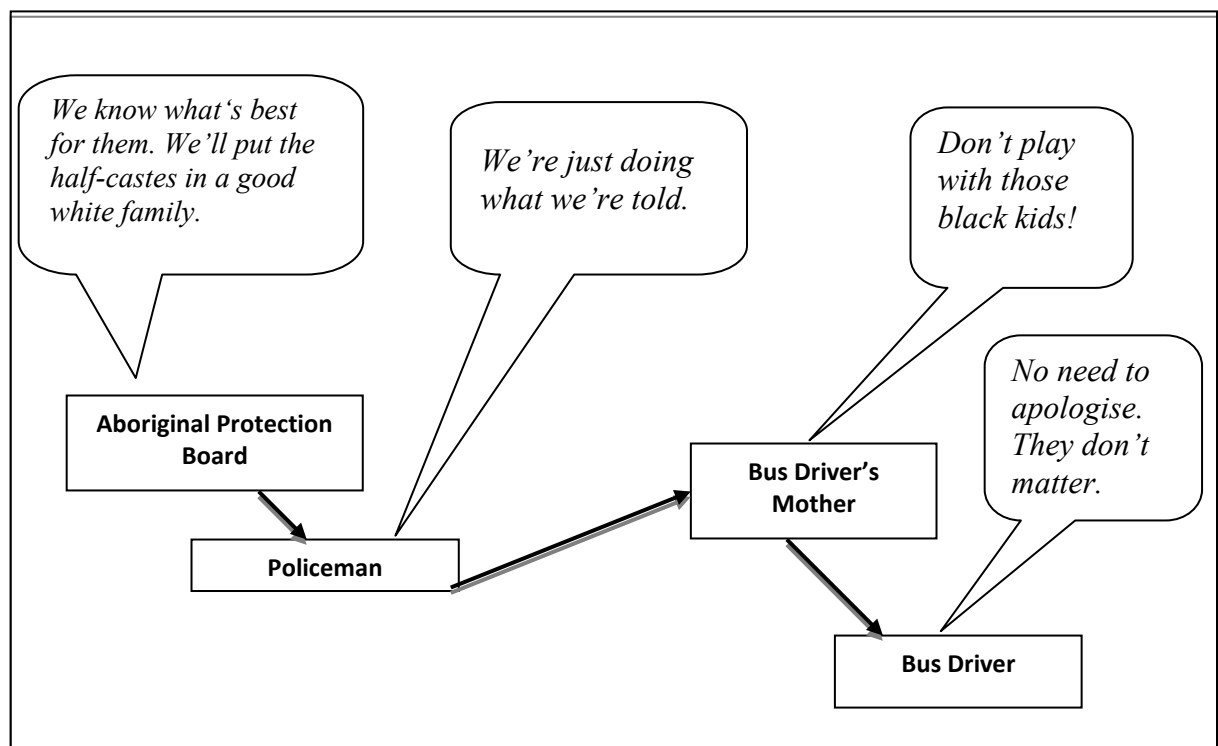
Aux: I'm behind him. I give the orders and tell him which children need to be taken.

Dir: And your purpose in doing this?

APB: As the name says, we're here for their [Aborigines] own protection. We know what's best for them. They can't look after their own kids. So we take the half-castes and put them in a good white family and that way they'll become good Australians.

Dir: Who are the half-castes?

Diagram 4: Historical Social Forces Acting on the Bus Driver



Expanding the System

This question sets off animated discussion in the group who conclude that often the Aboriginal women have been forced into relations with white men and are left to look after the children with no support from their white fathers.

The Director, with curiosity, asks:

“Who are these white men? We need to make them real so we feel their lives.”

Group members are silent at first then begin to thoughtfully name them variously as Mission/reserve managers, squatters, farm labourers and drovers, ordinary men and government officials - any male colonist who had contact with Aborigines who fancied “a bit of black velvet”.

Dir: *Someone take up the role of the ‘White Fathers’.*

A group member (GM2) steps forward. I interview for role and the values and worldview, to fill out the socius around this role. He had come England. Others, like him had come from Ireland and Scotland. Some had come as convicts and had served their term and now settled in the colony. Some had come as part of the military forces to keep the convicts under control. Some had come as free settlers. All believed the land was empty - ‘terra nullius’ and theirs for the taking.

There is silence as the impact of this worldview deepens. This has the effect of further deepening the awareness of the impact of this worldview.

Dir: *Who else do we need here?*

GM3: *Calls out: It all started with Captain Cook!*

Dir: *Come out and be Captain Cook.*

Captain Cook: *I discovered the Great South Land and I claimed New South Wales for the British Empire!*

GM4 reminds the group that *William Dampier* had actually landed at Cygnet Bay, on the west coast of Australia in 1682. Here he met some of the Aboriginal People and recorded his impressions in his in his journal.

Dir: *(To GM4) Take up the role of William Dampier recording his observations in his journal. Speak them out aloud.*

Dampier: “The inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world. Setting aside their humane shape, they differ but little from brutes.”

The group warms up to rage and shame at the naked racism displayed by all the explorers and colonisers in this drama. They are named as the “*front line force of the urge to colonise.*”

As superiority is the driver of racism I realise that this touches on the core purpose of the workshop: ‘*Owning our own racism and moving beyond it*’.

One of the participants advances the story by pointing out that in 1901 all the colonies on the Australian continent unite to form the *Commonwealth of Australia*.

Another adds that the first Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia did not include Aborigines. Knowing that this element of the system may well emerge, I have a copy of the relevant parts of the Constitution. I invite an auxiliary to take up the role of ‘*The Constitution.*’

The Constitution **Par. 51** “*The parliament shall, subject to this constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal race, in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.*”

Par. 127 “*In reckoning the numbers of people in the Commonwealth or of a state or other part of the Commonwealth aboriginal natives shall not be counted.*”

The auxiliary is moved to tears and at times struggles to speak the words. I notice bowed heads and movement towards the auxiliary in sympathy with her grief.

Group members are seeing with new clarity, the mindset that framed Australia’s first Constitution. The belief in white superiority is embedded in the fabric of Australian institutions, in its laws and practice.

The recognition of institutional racism is an important step in the growing awareness of the group. It shifts the focus of the drama from the individual to the system.

The question shifts from one of addressing individual racism to one of asking questions about each one’s role in benefiting from and contributing to institutional

racism. At this point my analysis is that the system of the **social forces** acting on the ‘*Bus Driver*’ in this moment, is sufficiently developed.

I ask myself what is missing and immediately see that the Aboriginal People on whom this system impacts are not yet adequately present in the drama.

I direct the remaining participants to ‘board the bus’ as the ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’.

Enacting the Whole System

When they are seated in the bus, I direct the other auxiliaries to enact the timeline from the earliest (chronological) scene beginning with the role of William Dampier, (see Diagram 5).

As the timeline is enacted, I notice that the ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’ are sinking down in their seats. As each role is enacted, they sink further and further down. I am struck by the potency of this moment: this is the essence of the work. The social forces are being enacted and their impact on people is being felt and movingly displayed. It is happening right here, right now, in the moment.

I recognise this as a defining moment in the sociodrama.

I allow the enactment to continue to the last role of the timeline then call ‘freeze’ while the ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’ were still in their sunk down positions.

I ask the auxiliaries playing the roles of ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’ to notice what is happening in their bodies. Responses include:

- “*I have slid down in my seat.*”
- “*I’m trying to escape.*”
- “*Yes, escape the pain and burden of all that history.*”
- “*My head is bowed down.*”
- “*I feel very little.*”
- “*I’m trying to disappear.*”

The auxiliaries in the roles of the social forces are also deeply affected. There are tears, looks of shock. Some have already been affected by the roles they are playing. Now as they became aware of the impact of their roles on the ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’ they **see and feel** the effect of the **social forces** on the people to whom they are directed.

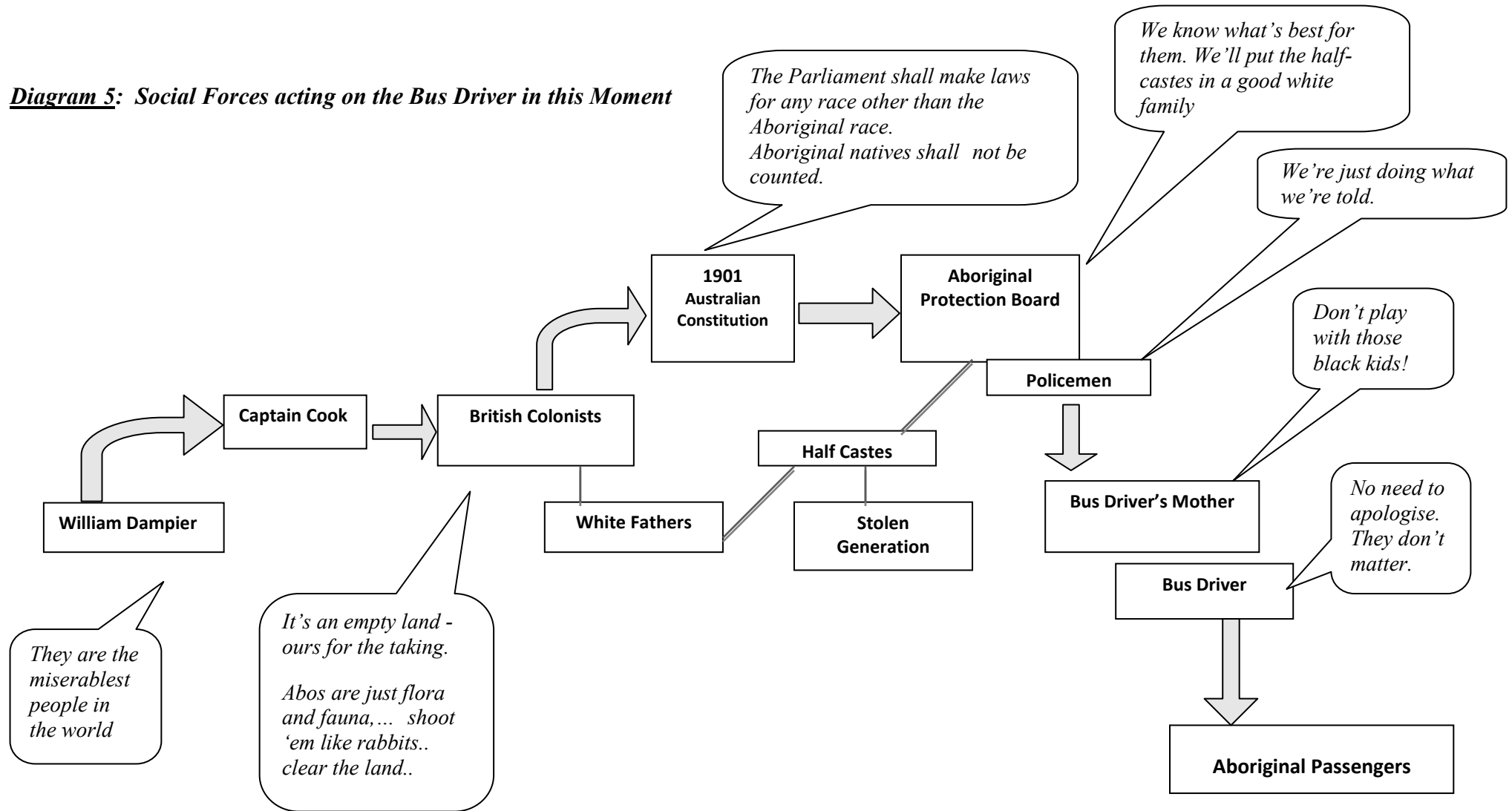
All participants experience the full weight of the social forces.

The auxiliaries in the roles of explorers, colonisers, lawmakers and law enforcement officers experience the unassailable power of their position of superiority. Most importantly, they witness and are moved by the effect of this power on the '*Aboriginal Passengers*'. They also experience disjuncture and discomfort of this stance with their own worldviews and values.

The auxiliaries in the roles of the '*Aboriginal Passengers*' experience the belittling and totally demoralising effect of the social force, expressed in the roles of explorers, colonisers, lawmakers and law enforcement officers. In the enactment, their spontaneous reaction of physically sinking down in their seats, speaks louder than any words.

I close the Enactment stage of the session.

Diagram 5: Social Forces acting on the Bus Driver in this Moment



INTEGRATION

The integration phase includes the sharing from the experience of the enactment.

This sharing is done from an individual and a systemic perspective.

Individual Sharing

The Director invites the group members to share from a personal level first, on their experience of the drama.

Referring to the warm up, group members name with some surprise and satisfaction that their own experience had been valued. *“What that did in the group experience for me was that I could actually present my own experience in a way that was totally honoured.”*

Others express relief on seeing that so much of the racism experienced by Aborigines is institutional. *“Not that it lets me as an individual off the hook, but I felt relieved that I wasn’t personally a racist.”*

The reading of the extracts from the Constitution is moving for the auxiliary in that role and for the whole group and also brought up feelings of shame in the group. Some referred to it as a *“profound moment”* and one said *“that’s when my heart started to spin.”*

The group member who played the role of the ‘*Bus Driver*’ is a little shaken by her experience: *“As the ‘Bus Driver’, I began by enjoying it then didn’t want to own that role. I was shocked that I so easily discovered my irrational feelings.”*

There are feelings of anger at the arrogance of the explorers and colonisers and the blatant mistreatment of other human beings. Some of the anger is also related to the shame of not knowing our own history and group members ask *“Why weren’t we told this at school?”*

Feelings of sadness are also expressed: sadness at what had been done to people, at the obduracy of the colonisers and sadness that so many opportunities to engage with the First Australians had been lost.

There is a heightened awareness at a feeling level of the effect of years and years of displacement and exclusion of Aborigines. This was especially poignant in the moment when the ‘*Aboriginal Passengers*’ were seen sinking down in their bus seats as the timeline was enacted from the beginning and the years of oppression were seen

to cumulatively bow them down. Several group members were asking “*If this short enactment can have that effect, what is it like for Aboriginal People who have been living with that history all their lives?*” Another group member says: “*People have carried all those little whispers of time right up to the present.*”

Sharing about the System

The Director invites the group to share from a systemic perspective, naming aspects of the systems revealed in the drama.

A group member says that what strikes her so forcibly is the attitude of total superiority on the part of the ‘whites’ and the fact that this attitude still pervades white Australians’ relations with Aborigines. Others comment and nod agreement.

Some participants name the dynamic of the system as a ‘clash of cultures’. But what is particularly insidious in this ‘clash of cultures’ is that one of the cultures, that of Aboriginal People is not *recognised* as a culture and therefore not respected.

Others note that the exertion of ‘power over’ people and the total control of their lives led to powerlessness and dependency.

Several participants remark on how the enactment showed the *extent* of colonial exploitation: in the length of its history and the depth of its impact on Aboriginal People.

Other participants observe that the display of the system made them aware of a ‘national consciousness’; that racism is institutional and goes right through society.

Several of the participants note that this analysis was different (from what they usually do) in that it was ‘analysis with feeling!’ They realise the significance of the experience of deep feeling in conjunction with insight.

When asked to note the main sub-systems in the system, participants are able to name the sub- system of *Explorers and Empire builders* and *Those Displaced by colonial expansion*. They also see the parallel in current society as depicted in the bus scene where there were black and white; those who need an apology and those who don’t; those who drive the bus and those who wait to be picked up.

As one person observes: “*the present is affected, maybe we should say, infected, by the past.*” They begin to ask, “*How do we move on from this?*” I suggest the question we are grappling with is the sociodramatic question I have been holding throughout

the drama: “*Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal People, how can we move forward to reconciliation?*” Participants agree: “*This is the challenge.*”

With sufficient analysis of the system shared and a connection made from the enactment to the present I conclude the Sharing. We have satisfactorily concluded the phases of a sociodrama - warm up, enactment and sharing/integration.

However, I know that we need to create clear next steps so as part of the integration I return to the process of the *Pastoral Circle* to both deepen the experience, and ground it in their deeply held values so that it includes plans for action. The sociodrama informs the reflection process of the Pastoral Circle and the reflection process also grounds the sociodrama in theologically informed practice in the world.

Return to Pastoral Circle Process

As explained in the warm up, the workshop was framed in the process of the *Pastoral Circle* which begins with **EXPERIENCE**, moves to **ANALYSIS**, then takes the question raised by the experience and honed in the analysis, to the **DIALOGUE WITH TRADITION** and insight from this leads to **ACTION**.

Using sociodrama as a way for participants to name and explore their experience has in fact deepened their personal experience and created a powerful *group* experience.

The sharing from both personal and systemic perspectives has led to an analysis by the group of the presenting situation and what it means. It has been an ‘experiential analysis’, or as one participant noted in the sharing, “analysis with feeling” The sociodrama has provided participants with insight and deep feeling, and they see the systems in which they are involved with a new clarity and are moved to want to do something to change them. They are open to further learning and to taking action.

Participants begin to ask what they can do about reconciliation between Aboriginal People and Non-Indigenous Australians. They articulate again the sociodramatic question held throughout the sociodrama and articulated by participants during the Sharing: ‘*Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal People, how can we move forward to reconciliation?*’

It occurs to me that the sociodramatic question is in fact what is known as the Critical Question in the process of the Pastoral Circle and can lead into the next phase: the Dialogue with the Tradition. I delight in the congruence of both processes.

The critical question is written on a whiteboard and participants copy it down. Participants are given a Scripture text, Mark 7:24-30, which tells of Jesus' encounter with a woman from Caana who is seeking healing for her daughter. With this are some questions for a critical reading of the text.

Participants then spend time in individual reflection with the following questions:

- How does the text speak to your critical question?
- How does your question *critique* the Text?
- What new understanding has emerged for you?
- What image has emerged?

Participants then meet in groups of 4-5 to share their responses, images and insights. They then return to the large group for some sharing from the smaller groups.

Several participants comment that taking the critical question to the text gives them a very different perspective on a familiar story.

The predominant response to the text is the 'shock' of seeing Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman as racist, or at least ethnocentric. So Jesus too was influenced by the historical and social forces of his time. I hear relief in participants' voices. The fact that he is culture-bound but can make a shift in response to the woman's pleading encourages participants in knowing that they too can make a shift beyond the restraints of their own culture and history.

This leads into the next phase where the insights from this reflection lead to informed action. I see that the group is ready to make plans for their own action in the world.

The Move to Action

I invite participants to gather in groups related to their work place or areas of common interest. My thinking is that action will be better planned and executed in collaboration with others rather than alone.

I remind participants that they are still responding to the critical (sociodramatic) question: *Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal People, how can we move forward to reconciliation?’*

As a guide I suggest they plan their actions using a basic guideline:

- What?
- Who? (will take this forward)
- When?

I am also aware that most of the participants are professional people who are well able to plan actions in a strategic manner. I notice the readiness and eagerness to go to the next step. They are in touch with their own progressive roles in the world.

The groups work enthusiastically and each comes up with practical actions. Some are personal actions relating to Aboriginal People they know and with whom they intend to continue building relationship.

Others are institutional such as plans to review or follow through on implementation of Indigenous Education policies in the Catholic Education Office, plans to celebrate Reconciliation Week in schools and plans for reconciliation events in local communities.

As the plans are shared back in the whole group, some participants name possible resources for these actions, including people, books, videos and music. These resources are listed, others added from the group and one group member undertakes to type the list and disseminate it to all group members.

I ask everyone to stand in a circle, and say one word or phrase for what they take with them. A sense of companionship is palpable as people speak. I realise that a satisfying sociodrama builds community.

This concludes the description of the workshop. In the next chapter I discuss key moments in the sociodrama and reflect on them to articulate, principles and practices that have guided me as the director of the sociodrama.

Chapter 4

Knowing What Makes It Work:

Articulating Learnings from the Workshops

Essential to my effective functioning as the sociodrama director is a sufficient level of conscious competence: knowing enough of why the method works – at any given moment of a group session or dramatic enactment – so that this awareness informs my leadership and interventions.

In this chapter, I have selected key moments in the workshop and reflected on what is happening in that moment and ‘what makes it work’.

In doing this I have articulated the psychodramatic principles and practices which underpin my functioning as a Group Leader and a Sociodrama Director.

Key Moments in the Sociodrama

Moment 1: The Group becomes Unified

The first moment comes during the warm up when I realise the group has begun to unify. I sense they are starting to let go of their fear of discovering their own racism. I feel the group is with me. This occurs during the discussion in response to the workshop purpose. I know this because of the animation and relaxed demeanour in the group. It has come about mainly because the warm up has been effective and I took adequate leadership from the beginning.

What makes it work?

Getting conscious about the roles needed to do the work

I began to craft the warm up in the preparation of the Invitation to the workshops in which the purpose of the workshop was stated as “owning our own racism and moving beyond it” and I consciously use these words to warm up prospective participants to roles of ‘*Fearless Truth Tellers*’ (as they own any racism in themselves) and ‘*Energised Change Agents*’ (as they move beyond it). I know from my own experience that these roles are central to working with reconciliation.

Sustaining the warm up: Starting with where they are

I re-state the Invitation to the workshop to remind participants of our purpose. *“Talk to the person beside you about your initial response to the Invitation.”* I am starting with where they are (as distinct from where I would like them to be). I know that this takes time and I also know that it is essential to bring people into the here and now.

Participants name their fears honestly and experience that nothing ‘bad’ happens. This frees and emboldens them to move forward. Their experience is valued by the leader, setting a healthy norm in the group. What grows is the willingness to work together to explore ways to keep moving beyond their fears.

Taking leadership: Framing the session

When I outline the process for the workshop I am aware that I am taking - and being given - clear leadership of the group. As the director I am aware that I need to hold the purpose for the group and to create the safety in which this challenging issue can be explored. So it is important for me and for the group that the leadership is clearly established and will not become an issue in itself.

Taking leadership: Presence that contains

I also know that the way I am in the group is a potent tool in creating a healthy group dynamic. This is particularly important in reconciliation because in this area there has been a void in leadership that can hold white fears and white dignity at the same time as recognising black reality and honouring black dignity. I do not avoid this and hold in me the capacity to relate simultaneously to both black and white people in their truth. I value the experience that has taught me that the very land we share invites us to live together not just in harmony but in deep appreciation of one another. While knowing that our shared history so far is predominantly one of conflict, I have moved beyond that conflict in myself: I am unified in my being.

Integrated leadership is of particular importance in this context because in sociodrama the group is the protagonist and the director is both part of the group and separate. In a single protagonist-centred drama, containment is often provided by the audience, but in a group-centred sociodrama it must be carried by the director alone. Therefore being unified in my being - reconciled - is of great assistance in preparing the group for a successful sociodramatic experience.

Moment 2 Spontaneity welling in me and rising in the group.

The next moment occurs during the sharing of stories about group members' experiences with Indigenous People. I feel delight at the richness of the stories in the group. I can see people are moved or amused or sad – and sometimes both. The warm up is deepening. I realise that the group is spontaneous, alive and ready to work. I am excited and my spontaneity and playfulness rises.

What makes it work?

Holding my role as purposeful director

When I ask for these stories to be shared in the whole group, the warm up deepens further. I am looking for a number of things: the capacity of the group to be involved with each other; a warm up to entering each other's reality; the effect on the group of sharing the stories and the roles developing in the group members.

I observe a sense of readiness, even eagerness, in the group at this stage. Their spontaneity is rising. My analysis is that the roles of 'Fearless Truth Tellers', 'Interdependent Co-learners' and 'Open Explorers' are sufficiently strong to move to the next step of the process.

I am also looking for a story that holds the purpose and the hopes and fears of the group. The stories are rich with imagery. Any one of them could be the subject of the enactment. I feel confident this is going to work. I am excited about the possibilities and feel my own spontaneity welling up.

Moment 3 Selection of the Protagonist

I select a protagonist whose story is from her own experience, is rich in imagery and human drama, includes Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians and holds the purpose of the group. Her story has the potential for displaying a broad social system and it addresses the sociodramatic question. She is warmed up, spontaneous and has strong links to group members. I feel confident and quietly excited that we have the makings of a powerful and effective sociodrama.

What makes it work?

Trusting my instinct: Sifting the possibilities while feeling the group and sensing the spontaneity of the protagonist

I notice the effect of the various stories on other group members. Emily's story has slightly more honesty, groundedness and poignancy than other stories. In response to her story other group members are deeply moved and thoughtful. I am moved and also excited as I can see the potential in this story for a rich and effective sociodrama.

Emily's spontaneity is high and her sociometric links to other members of the group deepen as she tells her story. She embodies the roles of *'Fearless Truth Teller'* and *'Energised Change Agent'* already developing in the group. I gauge that she will be grounded, honest and generous as a protagonist and that an enactment based on her story will adequately advance the group purpose.

Her story also holds the polarities in the group: the hopes and the anxieties; the motivating force and the reactive fear present in the group. I know from my own experience that if the protagonist doesn't hold both the motivating force and reactive fear there will be a limited enactment and the drama will be neither truthful nor satisfying.

I can see that there are both personal and social dimensions in her story and these are also present in her warm up. I feel confident she will also be free (spontaneous) enough to allow the focus to shift from the personal to the social forces and to allow the whole group to become the protagonist when (and if) this occurs. I decide we will start with a protagonist centred scene and be ready to move to a group centred drama.

Holding purposeful leadership: Framing the next step

I explain to the group that we will continue our exploration of our purpose, 'to own our own racism and move beyond it' by using one of their stories as the basis for an enactment, a drama that will take place on the stage which I indicate is in the area at the front of the room.

I invite Emily to step onto the stage.

Moment 4 Interview with the bus driver

The auxiliary selected to be the 'Bus Driver' is highly spontaneous and takes up the role enthusiastically and authentically. As I interview her in role, her warm up as the 'Bus Driver' deepens and also expands to makes a connection to the wider social forces that influenced him. The group is enthralled. I perceive that we are laying a sound platform for a solid piece of work, which will allow the social forces in this moment to be well displayed. I feel like, pumping the air with my fist and saying "YES! We have a sociodrama here!" I stay calm, resisting the trap of rushing to where I want the sociodrama to go and continue to use the method.

What makes it work?

Working with what is presented to bring out the values and beliefs

I see the spontaneity of the auxiliary playing the 'Bus Driver' is high so move directly to interview her in role:

Dir: "You look as though you are well acquainted with this job."

In role 'he' agrees and expands the role. The auxiliary is working from a level of warm up where she *is* the 'Bus Driver', she is more than performing the stereotypical role, she has put elements of herself into the role. The rest of the group, those on the bus as auxiliaries and those in the audience, are attentive and enjoying the enactment.

Through mirroring and inquiry I deepen the auxiliary's role as the 'Bus Driver'.

I explore where his attitude has come from and he identifies his mother as the source because she told him "*Never to play with those black kids.*" In role, the 'Bus Driver's Mother' provides further information to add to the display of social forces acting on the 'Bus Driver' at this moment.

As the role of the 'Bus Driver' deepens, the experience also deepens for other auxiliaries and for the audience. Because the 'Bus Driver' is well warmed up, the warm up is deepened for the whole group increasing their spontaneity and ability to contribute to the enactment.

Moment 5 Expanding the system

Group members catch on quickly and learn about concretising roles and role reversal through the enactment of the social forces acting on the 'Bus Driver'. They are jumping out of their seats to display social roles they have suddenly seen in a new way. I am pleased with myself that I have taken the time to deepen the roles enacted. The experience has been deepened for everyone and now they are ripe to become the 'Group as Protagonist'.

What makes it work?

The power of concretisation; reality is mirrored back to the group

We have adequately displayed the immediate social forces acting on the 'Bus Driver' (see Diagram 4). Group members see their first concretisation. This awakens them to the possibility of a new way of exploring reconciliation. I am calm and purposeful, so everyone can see what I am doing. Each new display deepens their awareness of what is operating in the bigger story of racism. What they are seeing mirrors back to them aspects of their individual stories. They are experiencing the power of enactment, enjoying it and are eager to be involved.

The focus has shifted from the 'Bus Driver' to the *Social Forces* acting on him in that moment. Through that concretisation alone they can stand outside the system and look at it with fresh eyes. Seeing the social forces concretised begins to free them from individual guilt. Group members are starting to think systemically and to make contributions to the display of the system from their own experience and knowledge. They call out new roles and want them included in the display. They are taking ownership of the display. The group has become the protagonist in the drama. We are co-creating the drama. At this point I know that whatever happens there will be learning.

I can see the effect of expanding the system and continue to concretise and interview for role as each new role is named by the group members.

Moment 6 Enacting the Whole System

We continue to set out the historical context and learn from each other. This is the bit I love about sociodrama: getting the whole system out and enacting it! The system is expanded until enough of the major elements contributing to racism in Australia are displayed. I watch for the point where as a producer I see that the drama is historically broad enough, to meet the sociodramatic question: “Given the colonial history of Australia, how can we own our own racism and move beyond it?” Then I run it chronologically for cumulative impact. Group members take up the roles fully. For the first time they see the entire system unleashed. They are deeply affected.

What makes it work?

Producing a collective display that holds the sociodramatic question

The system of *the Historical Social Forces acting on the Bus Driver* has been expanded (see Diagram 5). They can see the elements the sociodramatic question concretised and how it is portrayed as a system. The world of racism is no longer simply a paralysing morass of conflicted feelings but has an institutionalised and systemic existence. There are bigger forces at play than just those present in each individual.

Moment 7: Freezing the action: The Aborigines on the bus

As the timeline is run from the beginning, thus enacting the whole system present on the stage, the auxiliaries playing the ‘Aboriginal Passengers’ on the bus slink down further and further in their seats. I notice and call “Freeze!”

I draw the attention of the auxiliaries playing the ‘Aboriginal Passengers’ to their body positions. Some were not aware of how their bodies had reacted. Others observed: ‘I could just feel the weight of it all forcing me down.’

The auxiliaries in the other roles are profoundly moved at the effect the roles they are playing have on the ‘Aboriginal Passengers’. A group member articulates the obvious: “If that can happen to people in just a ten minute drama what must it be like for Aborigines in real life, generation after generation?”

What makes it work?

Director is alert to emergent properties in the system.

The deep level of warm up and high level of spontaneity in the group has enabled the auxiliaries in the roles of the 'Aboriginal Passengers' to respond with absolute congruity to the roles of the social forces being enacted and impacting on them. As director I notice and draw the group's attention to a critical aspect of the system that is out of their awareness. This was not a thinking response; it is expressed in and by their *bodies*.

Learning occurs when there is both insight and deep feeling

This moment is critical and extremely rich in the sociodrama because it is real, true and in the present moment. For all group members it is a profound moment in which insight and deep feeling coalesce. The insight is seeing the debilitating power of racism and the extent to which it is imbedded in Australian history and in social systems. Each person knows they are a part of those systems. The deep feeling is the shock of the experience of grief and paralysis in the passengers on the bus: the horror of white Australians seeing the physical and emotional effect of their cumulative history on Aboriginal People.

Without deep feeling, insight becomes only information: and without insight, feeling on its own will not promote change. Feeling needs to be informed by insight.

For change to occur, deep feeling and insight must both be present. This is particularly pertinent in relations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians because each culture has a different emphasis. Indigenous culture typically values deep feeling and draws insight and wisdom from feelings, individual and communal. Western culture on the other hand, typically values insight through reason and does not value feeling so highly; head thinking and problem solving dominate action for change.

Moment 8 Deepening the Process of Integration:

The group has been the protagonist and has 'owned' the sociodramatic question and taken it to their 'Dialogue with Tradition'. From this reflection they gain sharper insights. Participants meet readily in work related and interest groups to plan action in the world. From these actions reconciliation can begin to flow.

What makes it work?

Connecting with deep spiritual values

The insight and deep feeling experienced in the sociodrama has given participants an impetus for change and now the 'Dialogue with Tradition' and 'Action' phases of the overall process deepens the work. All participants share a common Christian value system. The Dialogue with Tradition connects them to their existing value system at the profound level where they hold a sense of their identity. The further insight encourages and indeed impels them to action.

Anchoring insights in action in the world

The experience and insights from the workshop would be all well and good but without action in the world, change may have occurred in individuals but nothing will have happened to make any difference in the systems displayed in the enactment. To achieve systemic change people to plan and act together. An individual attempting to change a system is too easily sidelined.

These action plans take the learnings back into the world to make a difference.

Group members have deeply engaged in a transformative learning process. Their relationships have strengthened and they are now warmed up to taking action in the social systems in which they live and work to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Australians.

These, then, are the elements that underpin my practice and, in my experience, make sociodrama work as a methodology for owning our own racism and moving beyond it, as a step towards reconciliation. In the following chapter these reflections are further refined and articulated as implications for practioners.

Chapter 5

Implications

From the experience of conducting the workshops and the reflection on the whole process through writing this thesis, several implications for practitioners have emerged about social change as it applies to relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians and about sociodrama in general.

1. Education for social change needs to be Participative, Integrative and Transformative

The application of Morenian methods ensures this. The work is:

Participative: when the experience and wisdom of the group is respected in the here and now, and utilized in co-creating the learning event and when there is sufficient warm up to enable spontaneity to emerge.

Integrative: when there is a conscious congruence between thinking, feeling and action and when participants have an awareness of the shifts that have occurred within themselves and within the group.

Transformative: when it brings about a shift in consciousness that leads to participants' changing their behaviour and taking steps to change the social systems in which they are involved.

2 The principles of sociodrama articulated by Moreno (see Ch 2 above), are of great value when working with collective social issues like racism.

- The primacy of the group as the source of the issue and the solution.
- The role of the group leader in maximizing the potential of the group by working with the 'here and now' in the group and by enabling them to access their spontaneity.
- The production of the wider sociometry (systems and sub-groups through which the social forces are expressed) which is relevant to the presenting issue.
- The attention to values: both those to be challenged (cultural conserve) and those to be lived by.

3. To be effective sociodrama must meet some basic criteria.

The lessons from Moreno's first attempt at sociodrama are relevant here.

To be *realistic*, sociodrama must:

- a) address an issue that is at least of common interest, and preferably of some consequence to the group.
- b) involve a large enough number of group participants for interaction and be manageable in terms of allowing adequate sociometric connections to be made.
- c) allow expression of both the hopes and the fears of the group.

4. The theory and practice of the psychodramatic method can be enhanced by dialogue with other theories and methods.

The writings and methodologies of racism education, liberation theology and transformative education can deepen our understanding and appreciation of Morenian methods for example, using sociodrama to display social forces as another way of doing structural analysis.

The dialogue with other theories, methodologies and practitioners has enhanced my own practice of the psychodramatic method and provides another framework for reflection on and critique of my work.

5. Reflection on one's work keeps the leader aware and continually learning.

Reflection on my work as a sociodramatist yields insights into my functioning as a group leader and director and so contributes to my ongoing learning as a practitioner.

Looking at the major elements I identified in Chapter 4 'What makes sociodrama work?' the implication is clear: a lot depends on the director attending to self, group, purpose, spontaneity, content and integration, in a coherent and supportive way.

The elements identified in Ch 4 offer a useful checklist for sociodrama directors preparing for and reflecting on their work.

Sociodrama is a powerful method for education about racism and working in this way will teach practitioners a lot about the effectiveness of the method.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to show how sociodrama can be used to enable people to own their own racism and move beyond it and so advance the process of reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal People and to articulate my learnings about the sociodramatic method by its application in this area.

Drawing on literature from the fields of racism education and transformative education and from Morenian theory and methodology has deepened my own understanding and appreciation of Morenian theory and methodology as participative, integrative and transformative.

Reviewing the workshop and my leadership of the group enabled a critical view of the work and the articulation of the principles and practice underpinning my work.

These elements of the thesis combine to affirm Morenian theory and method as practised in sociodrama, as effective in enabling people to own their own racism and move beyond it and so advance the process of reconciliation between white Australians and Aboriginal People.

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