

**Spotlight on Role-play:
Interrogating the theory and practice
of role-play in adult education from
a theatre arts perspective**

by

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PhD thesis

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the use of role-play in adult education. It is a piece of scholarly research that aims to further develop ideas of theory and practice in this area. It is also hoped that this research will provide a framework for practice that will encourage both adult educators and learners to feel more confident using role-play as a learning approach.

The research arose from problems that the author experienced in her practice as an adult educator using role-play in adult vocational education training programs in higher education. The key problem identified was how to involve participants in a role-play but at the same time encourage their critical awareness so that they could learn from the experience. Questions of involvement and its converse, detachment, also relate to the *emotional* content of learning, and how this can be safely and productively managed in a role-play situation.

Role-play in adult education is an under-theorised area, and the available literature offers inadequate answers to the problems identified above. There is, however, a great deal of research and information about role-play in theatre arts and related areas such as drama-in-education and dramatherapy, but this is rarely referred to in adult education. This may be because role-play is often presented as an aspect of simulation and gaming, which are strategies that tend to adopt a scientific rather than an arts approach to learning. Also, since much of the theatre arts literature that is relevant to role-play comes

from drama-in-education, it refers to child or adolescent learning rather than adult education.

This thesis argues that the positioning of role-play in the theoretical field of simulation and gaming is limiting. It proposes that it would be more productive if role-play could be seen as a theatre arts strategy. It demonstrates the significant benefits role-play could gain from an analysis of the available literature in this area, and how this could beneficially alter the way role-play is conceptualised and practised.

Once role-play is positioned as a theatre arts strategy it is possible to explore how its 'significant form' engages participants, yet also enables them to remain critically detached from the role-play so they can learn from it. The thesis also presents the proposition that aesthetic learning may have something significant to offer adult education.

Theatre arts can provide a comprehensive framework for conceptualising and using role-play in adult education. If role-play were to be utilised within this framework, then adding an arts perspective to adult education could potentially transform learning in this area.

Chapter 1.

Introduction: The background to the research

The story behind the research question

My personal background, experience, values and beliefs have been influential factors in the development of my doctoral research. Zinn has noted that “when the adult educator engages in the practice of education, certain beliefs about life in general are applied to the practice” (Zinn 1990, p. 40). I shall begin this dissertation therefore by telling the story behind the research. I shall describe how who I am and what I believe has helped determine the research I am doing and influenced the kind of questions I found myself asking as the thesis evolved.

The question that initiated this research emerged from years of reflection on my professional practice working as an adult educator in

the Higher Education sector. This process relates to Schon's ideas of "reflection-in-action (the 'thinking what they are doing while they are doing it') that practitioners sometimes bring to situations of uncertainty, uniqueness and conflict" (Schon 1987, p. xi). The 'uncertainty' and 'conflict' in my professional practice revolved around the use of role-play in adult education.

Schon suggests that "professional practice has at least as much to do with finding the problem as with solving the problem found" (1996, p. 18) I encountered the problem quickly but defining its exact nature took longer. When I began working as a teacher trainer in vocational education in the early 1980s, I found myself asking why role-play seemed so unpopular with my adult students. As soon as I mentioned I was going to do a role-play it was not unusual to hear groans of: "Not role-play please!"

It seemed that some students were reluctant to do role-play because they felt they were expected to perform as an actor, and did not feel competent to do so. Others believed that this activity was somehow connected to play and was childish and embarrassing. Still others would argue that role-play 'wasn't real', so was irrelevant to the outside world.

Some students related vivid stories about how they had been involved in role-play events in the past, which had stirred up strong emotions. These emotions had not been dealt with during the learning session and had left those involved feeling hurt and angry.

I found myself asking: "Why does role-play have this capacity to trigger such negative responses from participants?" and "How can I make

adult participants feel more comfortable when they engage in role-play?" I needed to understand why feelings of discomfort were associated with role-play, and discover how I could make it a positive learning experience for participants and facilitators.

The existing adult education literature on this topic did not meet my needs. Although there were a few specialist books on role-play (Bolton, 1999; Jones & Palmer 1987; Millroy 1982; Porter Ladousse, 1987; Shaw, Corsini, Blake & Mouton 1980; Van Ments 1983) these tended to focus on practice and often lacked the the adult education focus I required. They provided instructions on how to facilitate role-play, but there was scant information on the theoretical principles that supported this strategy. There is one text (Yardley-Matwiejczuk 1997) published subsequently to these, which does provide an erudite analysis of role-play theory and practice in adult education. It was written from a clinical psychology perspective, and errs in the other direction. Because it is so specialised and so theoretically dense in style, it does not provide a clear framework for practice.

It was this lack of a clear theoretical framework for practice that led me to return to my background in theatre and drama-in-education for answers. I found myself questioning why the literature on role-play in adult education rarely referred to the field of theatre arts, even though there are clear links between these two areas. Instead, role-play theory was embedded in simulation and gaming literature, which draws upon the social sciences and particularly on role-theory.

The "indeterminacies and value conflicts of practice" (Schon 1996, p. 19) led me initially to ask questions about the way role-play was facilitated in adult education. The exact nature of the problem of role-play practice

only became evident later. Of all the questions raised through my practice, I kept returning to the one that asked how I could engage and disengage students during a role-play. It was then that I decided that an understanding of theatre arts might provide a clearer rationale for how this learning strategy should be used.

It seemed that theatre arts might also be able to answer another question that had bothered me for some time. This concerned what exactly could be learnt through using role-play as an educational approach. Was role-play just a means of learning about interpersonal skills? Or is there some other inherent educational value in the process of role-play? And is this what makes it unique as a learning approach?

The problem I have chosen to research asks questions about the links between theatre arts and role-play and whether they are significant. It investigates the proposition that theatre arts can provide a coherent theoretical framework for role-play practice in adult education.

Educational and professional influences

Both theatre arts and role-play are concerned with enactment, but one is perceived as an art form designed for an audience, and the other as an educational tool for learning in which the performance element is minimised. It is because actors have to perform to audiences in the theatre that they have to develop specialist skills such as voice projection and body control. In role-play the audience factor is diminished, and so is the need for specialist acting skills. Instead, participants are expected to explore social roles they experience in

everyday life such as teacher, student, doctor and scientist. Errington, correctly in my view, points out:

...students who have role-experience in life can usually do role-play (1997, p. 3).

When students are 'in role' they have the opportunity to investigate the social expectations of a given role, and whether their interpretation of that role is acceptable to others.

The separation between role-play and theatre arts has always seemed artificial to me. This is because I have a background in theatre arts and spent three years at drama school in the UK training to be an actress before deciding to get a teaching qualification and move into the field of education. During my specialist drama teacher training course I was introduced to drama-in-education. This educational strategy utilises elements of theatre arts such as improvisation and mime to help children learn. Drama-in-education, like role-play, is not interested in the performance elements of theatre. Instead it emphasises the importance of the dramatic process—the student's experience of being in the drama. The focus is on student interaction and how this affects their personal and social development, rather than the quality of performance delivered. Role-play rather than acting is employed, and as all students usually participate in the drama event there is no conventional audience.

As a specialist drama teacher in secondary, further and higher education in the UK, I taught theatre as a performance art and also used drama-in-education when I was teaching across the curriculum in areas such as interpersonal skills and women's studies.

When in 1992 I left the UK and became part of the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology Sydney in Australia, I stopped being a drama specialist and became an adult educator. Although I had been involved in adult training for many years in the UK, I had not until now, seen this as my educational focus.

I found a niche for my frustrated drama interests in the branch of adult education known as experiential or experience-based learning (EBL). Like drama and theatre arts, experience-based learning is interested in active learning, learning in context and learning for social, political and personal development (Boud, Cohen & Walker 1993).

I was struck by the many similarities experience-based learning had to the drama-in-education approach I was familiar with, and particularly its use of educational drama techniques such as games, simulation and role-play. It was surprising however, that although drama techniques were employed in experience-based learning, the experience-based learning theory I studied made no reference to the extensive body of literature in the field of drama-in-education. I presumed this was because drama-in-education theory had mainly a primary and secondary educational focus and so may not have seemed relevant to adult educators.

Whilst experience-based learning provided me with some useful theoretical frameworks (Boud et al. 1983; Henry 1996; Kolb 1984; Saddington 2000) for thinking about role-play practice these did not answer all my questions, especially those concerning participant engagement and disengagement in role-play. I shall explain why this was the case in Chapter 3.

Focus on role-play

I began to take a particular interest in role-play when I became involved in teacher training for adults in further and technical education in 1983. It was easy to relate role-play to my experience of working as a drama specialist, so I felt comfortable using this learning approach. My drama background helped me see the value of role-play. It is an interactive, three-dimensional learning strategy which places learning in a context and demonstrates its relevance to the world outside the classroom. This interest led to my first article on role-play being published in the journal 'Business Education Today' (Collier 1985). This initial article introduces key issues that continue to be of concern to me, and which are explored further in this dissertation.

In this article I identified the problems of using role-play as a teaching strategy, and explored ways of making it safer for the facilitator to employ. Role-play is problematic because participants have concerns about having to perform in front of their peers. Consequently "there is a danger of alienating those participants who automatically believe that they can't act" (Collier 1985, p. 41). They also see it as dangerous because of its unpredictable, spontaneous nature and its ability to recreate not just everyday situations but also the emotions that accompany them. Role-play can expose participants' emotional vulnerability and this can be an uncomfortable experience.

Facilitators can also see role-play as problematic. They are worried by having to deal with participants who either refuse to engage in the strategy or become so involved that they become emotionally distressed.

The article in 'Business Education Today' was the first of a series of articles I published that examined the problems of using role-play as a learning strategy in adult education. These articles played an important part in the development of my thesis. They also helped me gain confidence in my newly adopted role of academic researcher and writer. In Chapter 2, I examine in detail how my publications, and the process of writing them, contributed to my research.

Once I became an adult educator involved in training, I wanted to provide better answers for those students I taught who intended to use role-play in their particular field of learning. They and I were asking: "How can I make role-play safer for participants to engage in?", "How can the emotional or affective aspects of role-play be best managed in a role-play event?" and "What kind learning can role-play promote?".

Instinctively I felt the answers to these questions were to be found in drama and theatre arts theory and practice, where I believe role-play has its roots. It seemed to me that the perception that theatre art is not relevant to adult teaching and learning was unsound. In Chapter 5, I argue that theatre has been used as a medium for education as well as entertainment since Aristotle's time. Once this is acknowledged, then there is a range of literature that can be accessed and used to provide answers to the problems I had encountered using role-play.

Linking role-play to theatre arts also gave me permission to see if related areas could provide insights into the use of role-play in adult education. I took some courses in dramatherapy, a therapeutic method that utilises theatre and drama-in-education techniques with the intention that they will be "therapeutic, healing or beneficial to the participants" (Jennings 1998, p. 33). I felt that dramatherapy might offer

answers to the questions I was asking about how best to deal with the emotional content of role-play in an educational setting. It did offer me fresh insights into the nature of role-play and ways of facilitating it more sensitively. In Chapter 8 I show the relevance of this approach to role-play and describe how it can help ensure that the affective aspects of learning can be better understood and managed in role-play in adult education.

My doctoral studies have allowed me to investigate the key questions on role-play that emerged from my professional practice. This research has enabled me to explore whether my instincts were correct in leading me to believe that theatre arts theory and practice could provide answers to these key questions. Perhaps most importantly this thesis has given me the opportunity to make a contribution to the way role-play is theorised as a learning strategy in adult education. In Chapter 6, I present a new theoretical perspective for role-play by positioning it as a theatre arts learning strategy.

I also hope this research will provide a framework for practice that will encourage both adult educators and learners to feel more confident using role-play as a learning approach. In Chapters 7, 8 and 9 I suggest how to use role-play as a theatre arts strategy, and also explore the kinds of learning that can be promoted through the arts.

I have written this section in an autobiographical mode in order to reveal something of the person behind the research. Abbs suggests that:

The central concern of all autobiography is to describe, evoke and generally recreate the development of the author's experience (1974, p. 6).

This autobiographical account describes how my research developed from my personal interests and professional experience. It highlights that my thesis is simultaneously a piece of scholarly research and it is also about practice. Through the analysis of a range of theatre arts and related literature I hope to find answers that will help me to improve my professional practice as an adult educator. I agree with Zinn's observation that:

Sometimes it is difficult to take time out from doing adult education, in order to think about why you do what you do. However, a little effort in this direction from time to time can reap valuable benefits (1990, p. 56).

Writing this thesis gave me 'time out' from doing adult education. It has allowed me to understand not only why I do what I do, but how I can do it better. I hope that by sharing what I have discovered others may also understand more clearly what they do and do it better.

Identifying multi-disciplinary perspectives

I have shown how my background in theatre and the experience of teaching in the different fields of drama, drama and theatre arts, and adult education, have shaped my research. They have enabled me to make connections with areas that rarely 'speak' to each other. This means that my thesis relies on an eclectic range of theoretical perspectives for its analysis of the research question. I will now identify these perspectives and the areas within them that relate to my research interest. A rationale for connecting these seemingly disparate areas of study will be made in Chapters 3 and 4.

The background information provided here is designed to signal key areas of interest that are relevant to this thesis and provide a reference point to help the navigation of this multi-disciplinary study.

Theatre arts

Theatre arts is chiefly about performance. It is concerned with the mechanics of theatre: acting, directing, stage-management; all the elements that help create the mysterious illusion of theatre:

Theatre is performance, though often the performance of a dramatic text, and entails not only words but space, actors, props, audience and the complex relations among those elements (Fortier 1997, p. 4).

The study of a dramatic text may be the starting point for a theatrical production, but is always subservient to the performed play. Theatre is concerned with bringing a play to life on the stage rather than talking about the literary value of the text. Theatre therefore only exists at the moment of any performance. Brook states that, "theatre is always a self-destructive art, and it is always written in the wind" (1986, p. 18). Along with dance, it is one of the most ephemeral of the arts. Once the performance is finished, the moment of theatre is over.

The origin of the term 'theatre' comes from the Greek *theatron*. *Theatron* derives from *theasthai* 'to behold' or 'to see'. Fortier suggests that whilst the visual element in theatre is important it also "of necessity involves both doing and seeing, practice and contemplation" (1997, p. 6). Therefore, whilst theatre is action and performance-based it also has a

reflective aspect. This relates to the meaning the audience and actors derive from any theatrical performance. Brook acknowledges:

I know of one acid test in the theatre. It is literally an acid test.
When a performance is over, what remains? (1986, p. 152).

For him, the purpose of theatre is not just to entertain but to help the audience become more aware of themselves and the society they inhabit. He argues that theatre art must have substance and meaning and that “this substance is the density of human experience” (Brook 1995, p. 112).

Brook reminds us of the importance of the audience dynamic in any theatrical event. He suggests that without an audience theatre does not exist. For him theatre does not reside in the buildings we identify as theatres but in any empty space:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. If a man {sic} walks across this empty space while someone else is watching him, then this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged (1986, p. 11).

Grotowski reinforces Brook’s idea that theatre cannot exist without an audience. He claims that: “at least one spectator is needed to make it a performance” (1986, p. 32).

In this research, I will examine the nature of theatrical performance, including the relationship between actor and audience. I focus on the director and actor’s view of theatre and performance and the theories that have emerged from their practice. I have chosen this perspective on

theatre arts because its pragmatic nature aligns itself to my experience as a teacher/facilitator in an educational setting. Directors work with groups to achieve particular goals just as an educator does, even though the aims of each may be different. I also refer to some of the arguments that surround the nature and purpose of performed theatre, and use Brook's four categories of theatre to provide a background to these arguments.

In the 'The Empty Space' Brook offers four categories of theatre for our consideration: deadly, holy, rough and immediate. As he notes, these categories are not meant to be final, and are more concerned with opening a debate on what theatre should be rather than fixing what it is exactly:

Truth in theatre is always on the move (1986, p. 157).

'Deadly theatre' is identified as 'bad' theatre and relates to what most of us would recognise as commercial theatre. For Brook this theatre "fails to elevate or instruct, it hardly even entertains" (1986, p. 12). The factors that make theatre deadly in Brook's terms are the conservative elements of theatre that stop it from changing. He identifies particularly "the cultural set-up, our inherited artistic values, in the economic framework, in the actor's life, in the critic's function" (1986, p. 12 & p. 20). It is the theatre of realism, of staid classics and the modern plays that copy them, or the fantasy of musical theatre.

This type of theatre is chiefly interested in profit, and suffocates experimentation and change because these risky practices cannot guarantee secure returns at the box office. The musicals that dominate the West End of London and Broadway in New York are examples of

the present trend towards 'dead theatre'. Whilst Brook sees there is a place for theatre as entertainment, he believes there needs to be more to it than this.

The second category Brook identifies is 'holy theatre'. This relates to theatre's origins in ritual, and its spiritual, mysterious nature. As holy theatre is concerned with theatre's illusionary nature, it is harder to describe. Image and symbol dominate and the invisible becomes tangible; not through the use of elaborate sets and costume but through subtle use of image and the imagination. It relates to the experimental theatre of Artaud and Grotowski. For Artaud, holy theatre was like a plague:

The plague takes dormant images, latent disorder and suddenly carries them to the point of the most extreme gestures. Theatre also takes gestures and develops them to the limit...For theatre can only happen the moment the inconceivable really begins, where poetry taking place on stage nourishes and superheats created symbols. (1985, p. 18).

This kind of theatre is seeking a new language of expression that goes beyond text and communicates directly with the audience through extremes of image and sound.

Grotowski believed that the actors who participated in holy theatre should commit themselves completely to it, like an artistic priesthood. Their purpose was to use theatre to create a mystical experience for the audience; to cleanse their souls through art. Today holy theatre tends to reside in the 'fringe' or 'avant garde' areas of theatre, although elements

of it, such as image and ritual, can be seen in more conventional productions.

The next category Brook describes is 'rough theatre'. This is popular theatre – not popular in the sense of box office success, but in relation to its roots with ordinary people. Rough theatre focuses on the community it serves and whatever is relevant to the interests and needs of that community. It is also often overtly political in nature. Brook notes how:

popular theatre is anti-authoritarian, anti-traditional, anti-pomp and anti-pretence (1986, p. 76).

This is the theatre of social change, or as Itzen defines it, "socialist theatre" (1986, p. x). It includes the theatre of Bertolt Brecht, Joan Littlewood and British community theatre companies such as 'Joint Stock' and 'The Monstrous Regiment of Women' (Ritchie 1987; McGrath 1986). In this theatre the text would often be written collaboratively by the group producing the play, and may include research into issues that would be pertinent to the community audience.

Brecht's concept of 'epic theatre' (1927, 1949) was influential in creating a particular theatrical style for rough theatre. This style of theatre is designed to sharpen the critical ability of the audience so that they recognise "the contradictions in bourgeois society and...hold their own experience up to comparison with the way these contradictions are presented" (Mueller in Thompson & Sacks 1994, p. 86). Brecht encourages the audience to identify with the reality of the play, but also to be critically detached so they can reflect on the political message embedded in the performance.

The final category Brook identifies is 'immediate theatre'. Here he conjures up an image of what he thinks theatre should be rather than what it is. It is a theatre where actor and audience are closely related to each other and part of the same social community. The only difference between them is that the actors take on the role of protagonist, whilst the rest of the community—the audience—observes their action on stage.

As pointed out before, without an audience theatre does not exist. Brook argues for a theatre that is meaningful and necessary to their existence. He claims, as Dewey (1934) does, that culture and art must not be separated from living—because once they are they become an unnecessary appendage and an irrelevancy. In order to describe what a theatre of necessity is like, Brook gives the example of psychodrama in a mental hospital:

Two hours after any session begins all the relations between the people present are slightly modified, because of the experience in which they have been plunged together...When they (the patients) leave the room they are not quite the same as when they entered (1986, p. 149).

Brook is talking about a kind of theatre which is transformative; it binds communities together but also challenges and changes them. This vision of theatre has more in common with the dance dramas of Aboriginal and Pacific Island cultures, where art is part of the seamless fabric of life and an essential form of communication (O'Toole 1992). The relationship between actors and audience should be a symbiotic one whereby "the audience assists the actor, and at the same time for the audience itself assistance comes back from the stage" (Brook 1986,

p. 156). Immediate theatre, however, is not just about reaffirming cultural norms but is also designed to reveal their inadequacies. Although Brook believes the actors should be part of the community they are performing to, they should also be “the spike in the audience that is determined to challenge itself” (1986, p. 150). He insists that:

If a play does not make us lose our balance, the evening is unbalanced (1988, p. 54).

Brook’s idea of theatre “not seeking to celebrate accepted values, but to challenge them” (1986, p. 150) is in tune with the ideals of many adult educators (Brookfield 1987; Mezirow 1990). His four theatre categories provide a useful framework for analysing theatre and its relationship to learning, and shall be used as a reference point throughout this research.

Theatre is also categorised as an art form. According to Langer, art is “the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling” (1979, p. 40). My dissertation will explore further the nature of art and its aesthetic function, and analyse its relevance to role-play in adult education.

Drama-in-education

Separating ‘drama’ from ‘theatre’ is not always easy, as the terms are often used interchangeably. I use them as separate terms to highlight the different disciplines of theatre and drama-in-education, but both theatre and drama-in-education employ both terms when describing what they are and what they do.

In theatre studies, drama has come to represent the dramatic text or script that is to be analysed (Fortier 1997). For example the drama of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' refers to the text of the play rather than to the play in performance. But drama comes from a word related to the Greek word 'to do', and is frequently used to describe the action or 'drama' happening on stage in the theatre.

It is this second understanding of drama that informs drama-in-education. Whilst drama-in-education has close connections to the area of theatre art, and utilises techniques such as mime and improvisation, it also distinguishes itself from this field in a number of ways. Firstly its foundations are in the romantic, progressive tradition of educational thinking, influenced by Rousseau's (1762) ideas on learning through experience and play:

All lessons of young people take the form of doing rather than talking; let them learn nothing from books that they can learn from experience (Rousseau in Rusk 1979, p. 114).

Dewey's ideas of learning practically through experience (1938) were also a driving force behind this new subject. Child-centred rather than performance-centred – with the focus on process rather than product – drama-in-education became a means for helping children learn from their experience in a playful manner. In addition, drama-in-education was also later strongly influenced by humanistic psychology, so the focus of learning became biased towards personal development and its "therapeutic benefits" (Hornbrook 1991, p. 2). Consequently its roots in theatre were minimised, and ideas of performing to an audience were rejected in favour of personal expression (Slade 1976; Way 1967).

In the UK (less so in Australia), there was a schism between drama-in-education and theatre arts, with heated debates about the nature and theoretical foundations of this new subject (Abbs 1987; Hornbrook 1989, 1991, 1998). Abbs claimed that because it rejected its theatre arts heritage, drama-in-education became a subject without substance—a mere teaching strategy with no content:

Devoid of art, devoid of the practices of theatre, devoid of artistic and critical terminology, drama became a method of teaching *without a subject* (Abbs in Hornbrook 1991, p. ix).

More recently however, this schism has been healed and the connections between theatre arts and drama-in-education have been reinforced and are seen as integral to this field of practice.

The subject matter of drama-in-education has been an area of vigorous dispute. If, as Abbs and Hornbrook claim, the study of theatre is not drama-in-education's primary subject matter, then what is? Heathcote (1984) has argued that it is the role of drama-in-education to uncover universal understandings; these seem to have resonances with Jung's 'collective unconscious'. Bolton (1986) challenged the idea that drama needed to be subject-orientated at all, and proposed it should follow the radical curriculum of Postman and Weingartener (1971) and provide a medium that answers questions such as:

Where do symbols come from?

Where does knowledge come from?

What do you think are some of man's {sic} most important ideas?

How do you know when a good idea becomes a bad idea?

What is progress?

What is change?

What are the most obvious causes of change? What are the least apparent?

What's worth knowing? How do you decide?

(Postman & Weingartner in Bolton 1986, p. 240).

Drama would thus be the means by which children could, through enactment, engage with these issues.

Heathcote (1984) and Bolton's (1985, 1986, 1990) ideas of what drama should teach was too apolitical for Bennett (1984), Davies (1983) and Nixon (1987). They argued that the purpose of drama-in-education was political education, and that this learning approach should be employed as a tool for political consciousness-raising. The subject matter that should be explored through drama was the nature of power and the reasons for the unequal power relationships that exist locally and globally. When Bolton and Heathcote explored issues of inequality they did so obliquely through themes of 'the outsider' and 'them and us' rather than through an analysis of class, race and gender.

This lack of agreement as to the exact nature of drama-in-education led to it being taught in an eclectic fashion, often according to a teacher's personal preference.

There has subsequently developed a greater recognition of the place of theatre arts in drama-in-education and the need to teach students the elements of form that are particular to this arts medium. How this should be achieved within the school curriculum is still a disputed area

(Bolton 1999; Hornbrook 1989, 1991, 1998; Neelands 1991; O'Toole 1992).

There are themes that emerge here from drama-in-education that are pertinent to role-play in adult education and which I will return to in due course. I will argue that role-play in adult education, for similar reasons to those outlined in drama-in-education, has also become detached from its roots in theatre. It therefore lacks a coherent theoretical framework and a firm basis for practice (Collier 1998, 1999, 2000). The question of what exactly should or could be taught through role-play is also an issue I will be considering further as my argument proceeds.

Dramatherapy

Dramatherapy uses dramatic form and theatre processes, including improvisation, movement, mime and related techniques to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and person growth. Landy (1990, 1993, 1994), Jennings (1987, 1994, 1997, 1998) and Jones (1996) have been key influences in the development of dramatherapy as a discipline closely related to, yet separate from, the more established area of psychodrama.

Landy also sees a close alignment between drama as an educational method and dramatherapy. He suggests that dramatherapy "incorporates the aims of educational and recreational drama but is greater than the sum of the two" (1994, p. 16). This is because it focuses on the healing potential of the dramatic approach.

The concept of drama and theatre having a therapeutic aspect is not a new idea. Theatre's healing dimension can be traced to its origins in early shamanic rituals and to the cathartic nature of Greek tragedy (Hornbrook 1991). Drama-in-education's therapeutic credentials are strengthened through its association with humanistic psychology and its consequent interest in personal and group development (Rogers 1983).

Adult education and experience-based learning

The focus of adult education is how adults learn formally, non-formally and informally (Foley 2000). It encompasses workplace learning, community learning and personal learning. For the purpose of this thesis I will be referring to formal adult learning, particularly in relation to higher education. I would hope however, that the theory and practice that I develop would have relevance to other adult education settings such as in the workplace and the community.

Adult education, in many of its contemporary forms, seems to share the same humanistic, person-centred values with drama-in-education. A number of theorists contrast adult education with child education, arguing that adults have different experience and needs from their child counterparts (Knowles 1990; Jarvis 1995; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler 2000; Tight 1996). Tennant reinforces the idea that "a fundamental difference between adults and children is that adults have a general 'life expertise' which children are yet to develop" (1994, p. 8). Consequently, adults should be taught in a different manner from children, be less dependent on their teachers, and move toward being self-directed learners.

There are many different perspectives on what constitutes adult education. Newman (1994) identifies four traditions: liberal, mechanistic, psychotherapy and community development. Liberal education refers to 'the great tradition' of adult education that proposes that learning should be for learning's sake (Whitelock in Newman 1994, p. 45). The mechanistic tradition draws on behaviourist ideas of learning. Its chief focus is on learning as behaviour modification, and the observable behavioural outcomes that can be achieved through this approach. The psychotherapy tradition is linked to humanistic views of learning, and is concerned with the development of personal awareness leading to personal growth. The community development tradition is a radical, political tradition. It promotes learning as a means of bringing about social change and is directed "against economic, political and cultural oppression" (Newman 1993, p. 52).

Experience-based learning is the area of adult education most pertinent to my thesis and it is where role-play as a learning strategy is most regularly positioned. Newman places experience-based learning (EBL) under the psychotherapy umbrella, though it is also seen as part of a progressive educational tradition (White & Brockett 1987). It is founded on the idea that experience is the foundation of all learning, and therefore needs to be valued highly in the educational process (Boud, Cohen and Walker 1993).

The tradition of experience-based learning embraces the constructivist view of learning which argues that "persons develop interpretive processes through their interaction in and with this social world" (Delia, O'Keefe & O'Keefe in Athanasou 1999, p. 358). Meaning is "influenced by the unique past of the learner" and is then further

constructed through peoples' social communication with each other (Boud et al. 1993, p. 10). Therefore experience-based learning promotes students working in groups and being actively involved in their learning. It uses techniques such as simulation, role-play, games and other kinds of group work in order to examine "the life experiences of the participants" (Newman 1994, p. 48).

I shall be referring to experience-based learning in more detail in Chapter 3, and examining the similarities and differences between it and drama-in-education. I will then propose why this analysis of experience-based learning and drama-in-education is significant to the way role-play is used in adult education.

The emotions

In experience-based learning the emotions are considered an important part of the learning process. Boud et al. go as far as to say that a "denial of feelings is a denial of learning" (1993, p. 15). The affective aspects of learning are of key importance to my research. Role-play has the ability not only to reproduce 'real life' situations and events but also to engender the emotions that relate to them. Finding a way to value and productively utilise the emotions that emerge through this kind of learning is central to my concerns.

It is necessary therefore to briefly define what I understand by the term 'emotion'. Athanasou notes that:

Despite the increase in research on emotions in recent years, there is still no widely accepted definition of 'emotion' (1999, p. 130).

Specific emotions have been identified, described, listed and categorised, but the possible permutations of these conceptual groupings are so numerous as to be unhelpful. Emotions can be described in biological terms and seen as groups of reactions that have some evolutionary purpose, for example, recognising situations that require 'flight' or 'fight' response. There is however one point of agreement amongst theorists which is that there is a definite link between emotions and behaviour.

For my present purpose, I shall use Hatfield and Rapson's (1990) definition of emotion. They suggest that the emotions can be viewed as a system that consists of cognitive, physiological and behavioural components. None of these components should be considered separately but should be seen to interact as a complex system within the human organism. Emotions exist at a neurophysiological level, which presents itself as electrochemical activity in the nervous system expressed physically through facial, vocal and bodily responses. They are also present at an experiential level. This refers to the "unique quality of consciousness" that each emotion engenders (Athanasou 1999, p. 131). In terms of this definition, thinking and feeling cannot be viewed as separate events, but are part of an integrated system.

The philosopher Spinoza (1677) provides further insight into what constitutes the emotional life. He suggests that the emotions derive from our nature as embodied creatures, and as such are "propelled by forces that we do not wholly understand" (Scruton in Monk & Raphael

2002, p. 161). Spinoza also argues that emotion is a form of thought, and therefore an expression of the activity of the mind. Jones reinforces this view of emotion and argues that:

Thoughts can trigger emotions and emotions can give rise to thoughts; the two are intertwined (2002, p. vii).

This connection between the emotions, reason and embodiment has particular relevance to the discussion of drama and aesthetic experience and to ideas of drama as therapy. This connection will be explored in more detail in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Ethics

The responsible facilitation of any learning event should require a consideration of the ethical dimensions involved. Ethics are the standards that guide our interactions with other people and our engagement with society as a whole. They are influenced by personal beliefs, prevailing social attitudes and enduring cultural values. Bullock and Trombley (1999, p. 284) define ethics as:

The branch of PHILOSOPHY that investigates morality and, in particular, the kind of thinking by which human conduct is guided and may be appraised.

Hunt reinforces this definition describing ethics as “the study of why one state of affairs is morally better or worse than another state of affairs” (1994, p. 5).

Ethics is not just a system of rules to be followed slavishly without thought but is based on “ethical reasoning” (Singer 1994, p. 8) which takes into account the complexities inherent in any situation. Singer describes the limitations of blindly following an ethical rule such as ‘Do not lie’:

... if you were living in Nazi Germany and the Gestapo came to your door looking for Jews, it would surely be right to deny the existence of the Jewish family hiding in your attic (1994, p. 2).

In this context, he argues, reason would tell you that to lie is ethically correct, and that to tell the truth would lead to yourself and others being harmed.

The principle of not knowingly or intentionally harming another person without their informed consent is an ethical position I see as being particularly relevant to questions of how role-play should be facilitated in adult education.

Jarvis (1997, p. 37) suggests that “morality lies in the intention to be in a caring relationship with the Other”. The facilitator in a learning situation inevitably establishes some kind of relationship with the student (the Other) she is teaching. The facilitator has the power to make choices about how and when to intervene in the learning process. Every intervention has an impact on the learning and therefore on the relationship between learner and facilitator (Heron 1999).

Let us suppose we adopt, as an ethical premise, that the relationship between facilitator and learner should be based on mutual respect and

care for the student's integrity and human rights. It would follow, then, that it would be inconceivable for interventions made during the learning process to ever be designed to deliberately cause the learner harm. But the matter is far more complex than that, because we are always faced with the fact that, however careful a facilitator may be, unintended harm may result. This highlights the difficulty—some would say the impossibility—of ever reducing ethics to a set of 'rules'.

Singer (1994, p. 2) argues that "the whole point of ethical judgments is to guide practice". I agree with this because it emphasises that ethics does not exist in a vacuum, functioning as a stimulus for scholarly debate. Ethics must have relevance to practice. Even if making ethical judgments is a complex and difficult task, it has to be seen an integral part of the educational process, because as educational practitioners we have a duty of care towards our students.

Having a clear ethical approach is particularly pertinent to role-play because it is a strategy that encourages and values the affective aspects of learning. This means that it has the potential to cause participants emotional damage. Once we realise that the student's emotional well-being is at stake during the facilitation of a role-play, it is important to decide what constitutes appropriate ethical practice for this form of learning.

One of the reasons I embarked on this research was because I believed that role-play was, on occasions, being practised in a way that was potentially (and in some cases actually) harmful to learners. This is one of the reasons why I have come to believe that so many students are reluctant to engage in role-play. For these students, some previous experiences of doing role-play had left them feeling emotionally

vulnerable or embarrassed in front of their peers. When role-play becomes a means of causing students to become emotionally distressed, this can be seen as a form of harm. It may be evidenced at the time as distress, or 'hurt', but I believe that if this is not addressed and suitably ameliorated, it may result in more or less permanent harm. This 'harm' could manifest itself as the student having negative feelings about learning through role-play or even towards learning in general.

I shall be taking the ethical position that role-play as a learning strategy should in the first instance not ever deliberately cause students emotional distress. Further, I hold that if any role-play practice has a clear potential for causing distress, then it should only be engaged in under strict conditions (to be stipulated in due course). I will thus be exploring how role-play can be facilitated in a way that avoids as far as possible causing emotional harm to students or, if such harm is possible, that the harm is minimised and ameliorated to the greatest possible extent.

Once an ethical stance has been adopted it should be tested to see if it provides a rational basis for practice. For example, it could be argued that if learning is to be transforming, it will challenge as well as nurture learners (Mezirow 1990, 1991). The process of taking on a different role is designed to challenge our established perceptions of the world, and this in itself can cause emotional trauma. There will be times when students will be disorientated by the role-play experience and even emotionally disturbed. However, one of the aims of my research is to find ways of managing the affective aspects of learning productively so that it can lead to further learning rather than feelings of disempowerment and abandonment.

The proposition that students can be harmed when participating in a role-play, and why this might happen, is explored in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The question of how to address this problem is a key factor that I return to and examine throughout this research.

Hunt (1994, p. 31) reminds us that anyone who facilitates experiential learning (including role-play) will have to make ethical decisions. However well thought through these are, there will always be the possibility of error:

Realisation of one's fallibility, however, need not lead to paralysis of action. Martin Luther King was plagued by doubts about the rightness of his actions. Yet he acted. It is that rare combination of self-doubt, coupled by a willingness to act on the best of one's understanding of the morally right path, that makes for heroes. It also makes for tragedy at times. Experiential education practitioners have no less difficult task than did King. The issues are the same. Only the settings change.

Other sources

Perhaps before I end this chapter I should emphasise once again that as a practicing professional and mature student I inevitably draw on many and varied sources in both my practice and research. These include for example such fields as action research (Revans, 1980; McGill & Beatty, 1992) semiotics (Barthes; 1964; Saussure, 1915) and psychodynamic theory (Jung 1968).

Pronouns and gender

Where the gender of a person referred to in the text (eg. the facilitator) is uncertain, I have chosen for reasons of simplicity and clarity to generally use the pronoun 'she' rather than 'he or she' or 'he/she'. Another reason for choosing to foreground the female presence in the text is because of the predominance of the male voice in academic writing (Gilligan 1993; Grant & Knowles, 1999).

Chapter 2.

Methodology

Adopting the role of a scholarly researcher

Research in education is a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collation and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction (Anderson 1990, p. 4).

In the last chapter I described the practitioner-based nature of my background and the disorientating experience of changing from a drama specialist to an adult educator when I moved to the University of Technology Sydney in Australia. Part of this disorientation was the expectation by the University that I should be a researcher as well as an educational practitioner. This was a daunting prospect. Academic writing can cause a great deal of anxiety, even among experienced researchers. Anderson believes one of the reasons for this is because:

The written word is public, and if you don't say it right, your thoughts are confused, or worse, you will be judged to have nothing important to say and everyone will know (1990 p. 89).

In this chapter I will explore how I altered the perception I held of myself as a practitioner rather than an academic, and adopted the role of academic researcher. I achieved this through my active engagement in writing, delivering papers at conferences and then publishing these papers in specialist, academic journals. These papers became the foundation for writing this research.

The process of consciously taking on the role of academic researcher and by doing so gaining confidence in that role, relates to Heathcote's (1984, 1995) ideas of the 'mantle of the expert'. Heathcote, a drama-in-education expert herself, argues that if we adopt the role of the expert, we can begin to function more confidently in that role. My attempts to adopt the 'mantle of the expert' of an academic writer have been an important part of the development of this thesis and will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

My research draws on three broad sources—published literature in the field of role-play and other related areas; my own experience—spanning thirty years—as a drama specialist, theatre-goer and a practitioner in the field of education; and the creation of new theory through the process of writing and my engagement with a scholarly community. Stenhouse notes that “there is no escaping the fact that it is the teacher's subjective perception which is crucial for practice” (1975, p. 157).

I knew from the beginning that my research would not be empirical in nature, nor would it be scientifically quantitative (Burns 1994; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000; de Marrais & Lapin 2004). I needed to engage with a range of literature in a variety of disciplines in order to reconceptualise role-play in adult education and present a new framework for practice. As mentioned earlier, I had many concerns about how role-play was being applied and was also troubled by the paucity of theory presently available in adult education that could be used to inform practice.

I would therefore categorise this thesis as a piece of scholarly research. Scholars are academics who “conduct research, publish, and then perhaps convey their knowledge to students or apply what they have learned” (Boyer 1990, p. 15). Traditionally scholarly research involves the examination of existing bodies of knowledge and the development of new perspectives on a particular field of practice, in this case role-play in adult education. The creation of new knowledge through analysis of previous academic publications is an established approach (Boyden 1997; Cohen et al. 2000; Burns 1994). Whilst my research does focus on the “critical analysis of prior research and theory” and on moving that theory forward (Anderson 1990, p. 47), it also includes many other elements that this traditional interpretation of scholarly research does not usually encompass—such as autobiography, storytelling and examples of educational practice.

My interpretation of scholarly research is aligned to Boyer’s enlarged perspective of scholarship. It includes the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching (1990, pp. 17-25).

The scholarship of discovery refers to research as the advancement of knowledge, and is aligned to traditional views of scholarship. It embraces a passion for enquiry, the need to seek answers to the unknown, and the value of knowledge for its own sake. Boyer proposes that “the discovery of new knowledge is absolutely critical” to the academy and the world (1990, p. 17). My enquiry is concerned with the discovery of new knowledge, and its aim is to provide a different perspective on role-play in adult education.

The scholarship of integration highlights the need for research to make “connections across disciplines, placing the specialties in a larger context” (Boyer 1990, p. 18). My research arose from connections I was making across disciplines as I shifted from working in theatre arts to adult education. I was able to use the different perspectives gained from these disciplines to bring new insights to the topic of my research: role-play.

The scholarship of application challenges ideas that knowledge is first discovered and then applied (Boyer 1990, p. 20). It suggests a more dynamic relationship where knowledge and application inform and stimulate each other. The scholar’s interaction with society and the wider world initiate ideas for research as well as providing a space for the application of the fruits of research. The problems that I experienced using role-play were similar to those experienced by other adult educators. The realisation that my professional interests were relevant to others motivated this enquiry. One of the aims of my research was to discover more effective ways to use role-play in adult education and provide practical ideas that would help fellow professionals use role-play in their work (see Chapter 9).

Aristotle said that: "Teaching is the highest form of understanding". It is not however, usually acknowledged as part of scholarship but viewed as "a routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do" (Boyer 1990, p. 23). Boyer argues for *teaching* to be recognised as a crucial element of scholarship. Successful teachers need to be knowledgeable in their fields of learning and will continue to learn through the process of teaching and their interaction with learners. He believes inspired teaching keeps "the flame of scholarship alive" and without it "the continuity of knowledge will be broken and the store of knowledge dangerously diminished" (Boyer 1990, p. 24).

My research values the learning that I have gained from my experience as a teacher. I use examples from my teaching to clarify my research question and as a basis for testing new theoretical perspectives that emerged from my enquiry. Teaching is integral to my understanding of what scholarly research should be.

The examples I present of teaching and theatre performances I have attended are re-constructed as stories. Therefore my research utilises a form of narrative inquiry (Kramp in de Marrais & Lapan 2004). I relate stories of my experience and "construct a narrative that is particular, personal, and contextualised in time and place" (2004, p. 105). Then I analyse these stories in relation to my research question. For example, in Chapter 4 I describe a visit to a fringe theatre performance that was part of the Edinburgh Festival. I use this story to examine the premise that theatre is concerned with education as well as entertainment. I agree with Elbaz's argument that:

Story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This

is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge can best be understood this way (in Ballantyne 1997, p. xix).

The stories I include in my thesis could be seen as being autobiographical. Autobiography (Abbs 1974; Andresen in Boud et al. 1993; Ballantyne, Bain & Packer 1998; Brookfield 1995) has been accepted as a research approach in adult education. Although I am not using autobiography as my main research approach, its acceptance lends validity to the inclusion of personal and professional material in this thesis.

Reflecting on personal experience is a key concept in adult education. Boud, Keogh and Walker argue that:

Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important to learning (1998 p. 19).

Crucial to this concept of reflection is the idea that educators need to deliberately consider past experiences, so that they can analyse them and begin to make choices about what they will and will not do (Flannery & Wislock 1991; Schon 1987, 1996). It includes axiological knowledge which Anderson terms "the theory of experience" or "insightful observation" (1990 p. 46).

In this thesis I reflect on my past and present practice in order to understand it better and then use these insights and an analysis of the literature relevant to my field of study to develop new theory pertinent to my professional practice.

There are many examples of writers in adult education (Newman 1993, 1994, 1999; Brookfield 1990, 1993, 1995; Jarvis 1995; Miller 1993) who employ the scholarly research approach and utilise personal experience and narrative inquiry as a research resource.

It is, however, the process of creating new theory through writing which has proved to be the most challenging and interesting of the methodologies I have employed for this PhD thesis. This is because rather than 'gathering new data' through conventional research techniques such as interviews, I adopted the strategy of publishing my doctoral work through conference papers, academic books and journals as I progressed with my research. By doing this I was able to engage as a scholar with the specialist academic community of interest to me and claim some expertise in the field I was examining. This process also helped me to begin to perceive myself as a credible academic writer and adopt that role with greater confidence. In the next section I will explain this in more detail and analyse how this research approach was a vital component of my methodology.

Putting on the 'mantle of the expert'

When I began my research I had published only three articles and these had been short, practitioner-based pieces in professional journals. Consequently, I was not perceived among my peers as one of those

who contributed to the research culture of the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology Sydney.

I sensed what Miller (in Saunders, Sampson & Lee 1999, p. 706) noted, that writing in universities was “an institutionalised way of discriminating between those who will or will not occupy a space for contributing to (and for changing) powerful discourse traditions”. I felt keenly my “exclusion from the scene of that power” (Saunders et al. 1999, p. 706) and this had a strong impact on the way that I viewed myself as an academic writer. It was hard to envisage ever being in the position of “the confident academic writer”, let alone a person who would produce a thesis “which lays some claim to ‘new’ knowledge, and a newly licensed kind of person, a ‘doctor’ ” (Lee 1998, p. 121).

The only way that I could see myself overcoming the problem was by writing a series of connected articles on areas of interest to my research thesis and getting them published. These articles would provide the core of my thesis and help develop my credibility as an academic writer who had something important to contribute to my chosen field of study: role-play.

I decided to adopt the following strategy. Firstly, I wrote and presented a paper for a conference and received feedback from other specialists.

After this, I rewrote the paper as an article and put it forward for publication. I targeted a publication that had a reputation for including novice writers and that had recently published articles on role-play by key practitioners in the field.

The strategy was successful and, from 1997, I was writing two conference papers a year and getting one published. The steady publication of articles on areas of my research interest increased my status in the field and in the institution. This in turn strengthened my confidence in adopting the role of academic writer. It gave me credibility in my specialist area of role-play and allowed me to actively engage in the local and international scholarly community in a way I had not done before. For example, I was asked to be part of a panel of research experts at a local drama symposium and a keynote speaker at an international conference. I received requests for information on my research from academics in Australia, Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the UK.

What I did not realise until later was that this writing strategy utilises ideas that are integral to my research and reinforces their practical value. The publishing methodology that I adopted relates to drama-in-education ideas of learning through 'the mantle of the expert' and 'writing-in-role' (Heathcote 1984, 1995; Barrs 1990). Although I was not involved in a role-play exercise for educational purposes, I was using publishing as a way of helping me to develop my role as an academic, as an 'expert' in my chosen area. This gave me the platform to write confidently in a new voice and genre. As soon as I functioned as an academic and wrote and presented papers at conferences, and had articles published in relevant academic books and journals, I began to take on the role of the academic. I had put on 'the mantle of the expert' and this had helped me to see myself as a person with some expertise in the field and the right to write about this.

As Lee (1998, p. 121) notes, "the question of *writing*, that central, difficult and often trauma-ridden activity of the production of the

doctoral thesis” has been given little attention in the research on doctoral studies. However as the process of writing was integral to what was written in my thesis, it deserves to be dealt with as part of my methodological approach.

When I decided to use publication as a means of writing my doctorate, I was looking for a way to explore my ideas in a public forum and gain feedback from my peers. I was able to do this through a process of writing papers for conferences and then refining these for publication. I strategically chose to publish in the ‘The International Research Simulation and Gaming Yearbook’ because this book was one that was most relevant to my field of research. It was also linked to an international annual conference given by the ‘Society for the Promotion of Games and Simulation in Education and Training’ (SAGSET). From 1997 I made an effort to attend the SAGSET conference, deliver a paper, and then publish in the Yearbook, which was refereed and edited by respected specialists in this field and delivered through the prestigious Kogan Page publishing house.

By doing this I was developing material for my thesis and establishing my role as an academic expert in role-play in adult education. As I began to gain academic credibility through conference presentations and was viewed as a specialist practitioner in the field, I also grew in confidence as a writer. From 1997 to 2002 when I began writing my thesis in earnest, I published four chapters for the ‘International Research Yearbook into Simulation and Games’, after presenting them as papers at SAGSET annual conferences. I also wrote and presented another three papers at other conferences and one of those has been put forward for publication in ‘Simulation and Gaming’, another international refereed journal.

I now believe I was employing an adapted version of Dorothy Heathcote's 'mantle of the expert' approach in order to gain confidence as an academic writer. Heathcote defines 'the mantle of the expert' in the following way:

'Mantle' meaning: I declare that I will uphold the life-style and standards of my calling. 'Expert' meaning: Furthermore I will undertake to take seriously the acquisition and using of those skills deemed necessary in that life-style I have entered because of my calling (1984, p. 206).

Neelands gives an example of how this could work in drama-in-education practice. He suggests that students working on a theme of 'Looking after elderly people' could be invited to take on the roles of architects in order to research their needs. They then have to function as experts and design a suitable living environment. In this case, participants are "endowed with specialist knowledge that is relevant to the situation" (Neelands 2004, p. 34), and they are encouraged to believe they have the expertise to competently perform the skills required.

The idea behind this approach is that by functioning as an expert, by responding 'as if' you are one, you gain the confidence to become what you imagine. It is also argued (Heathcote 1984, 1995; Neelands 1991, 2003) that if you act confidently as an expert then others will believe in you too and respond accordingly and reinforce your expert stance.

By consciously deciding to take on the high-status role of expert academic and specialist in my field of research, I was able to build belief in this role, fulfil the functions expected of it and eventually feel

that it was one that I could play with some confidence. This process of writing 'in-role' was also helpful in developing my expertise as an academic writer, which in turn assisted in the writing of this work.

Developing my research through 'writing in role'

Barrs argues that writing and role-taking are linked. When a person writes in a particular fashion and adopts a certain genre then "the writer has also taken on a certain way of looking" (1990, p. 11). She provides a powerful example of a West Indian secondary school student in the UK who attempts with help from his peers to translate a poem written in Caribbean dialect into standard English. At first he flounders in the attempt but when asked to read the poem 'as if' he was a middle class white man, he is able to speak using the standard English form.

He then uses this experience as a springboard for translating the poem into standard written English. Barrs suggests that this is "an exciting example of the way in which role-taking can activate linguistic knowledge that otherwise remain unused" (1990, p. 10). By taking on the role of a confident user of standard English in a majority of his interactions, the student gained the ability to function expertly in this role and utilise untapped linguistic resources. These, Barrs concludes, come from children's experience of reading other genres and from other media such as film and television.

It appears that asking students to take on an expert role can help them adopt the genre of writing appropriate to that role. So for example, if the students are role-playing expert scientists who have to write a

scientific report, they will be able to write in the appropriate language register because they are viewing the world through scientific eyes. Just as role-playing encourages participants to take on personae and perspectives that encourage the practice of a broader linguistic range, then writing 'in role' "could also provide a means of taking on a particular stance as a writer" (Barrs 1990, p. 11). Writing-in-role also provides a context and a relevant audience to address. Neelands reinforces this point stressing that writing in role means that what is written is "directly related to the context or the drama narrative of the drama - there is a clearer purpose for writing/ownership of the topic" (1992, p. 19).

Barrs argues that successful writers always take on a role in order to communicate to their particular audience. As a local government officer she writes in "the language of committee reports, formal letters and official memoranda" (1990, p. 11). It is a voice that she has taken on through her reading of such documents:

Role is another way of focusing – of taking up an attitude to your material. Either a clear role or a clear sense of audience is needed for a writer to have a starting point, a reason for making a selection from their data. What both offer is a viewpoint, an angle from which to make the selection (Barrs 1990, p. 11).

Miller and Saxton present another example of how writing in role gave Jon, a student who had difficulty writing, the confidence to write. In this case the role adopted by the student was not an expert one but that of a farmer writing down his thoughts as the bank foreclosed on his property during America's 1930's Great Depression. Just being in role,

however, encouraged him to “put down words on paper in a way that he had never done before” (Miller and Saxton 2004, p. 9). The authors describe the transformation that took place:

The words flowed and continued to flow through that evening at home. He showed his mother what he had written and asked, ‘Have I written enough?’ She asked, ‘Have you said all you need to say?’ That question started the writing again. Since then, he continues to write and write both in school and at home (2004, p. 9).

Whilst I was not actually involved in role-playing in the full sense of the term I was, I believe, consciously trying out a new role in order to gain confidence as an academic writer. The paper presentations and publications all contributed to the development of this role as well as helping me find an appropriate writing ‘voice’ for my thesis.

Lee notes that little attention has been paid to “what kinds of persons are formed through the processes and practices of doctoral research and thesis writing” (1998, p. 121). She argues that doctoral writers need to develop their identities as writers in order to be successful. One of the problems she notes in the doctoral writing process is the tendency for students to view the collection of data and research information as being separate from the writing of the doctorate itself and this produces work that is dull and uninspiring. Richardson (in Lee, p. 121) notes the “secret displeasure” she experiences reading—and often discarding—doctoral research texts of this kind.

Research writing is not just concerned with recording knowledge produced elsewhere but with actively shaping it. In order to do this, students have to find their own voice and imagine that they have the

right to speak within the academic community through their research. Lee takes this argument further:

...research writers must learn to *invent the university* for themselves and they must do this for themselves before they are ready, before they have a proper project and a place, before they have a right to speak. That is, doctoral research writers cannot wait until the research is done and then spring *full-formed* into the scholarly community in which they seek to take their place. The process of writing the research, of composing a thesis, is a process of invention, not only of text but of a certain kind of writer self who must write with authority before possessing such authority (Lee 1998, p. 128).

The methodology of writing and publishing articles was devised to focus on the kind of writer I wanted to become and on the academic role I wanted to develop.

How publications contributed to my writing of this thesis

Developing my doctoral thesis by writing papers and publishing articles also assisted in clarifying the focus of my research topic. Moxley (1992, p. 9) notes that: “whilst you may occasionally know what you want to say before writing, much scholarship involves giving form to new ideas”. This was certainly my experience, for it was only by writing the articles that I began to discover what it was that I really wanted to explore within my chosen area of research.

Five out of the eight papers I wrote were delivered at SAGSET (Society for the Promotion of Simulation and Games) international conferences held in the United Kingdom in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. These were subsequently published in the SAGSET 'International Simulations and Gaming Research Yearbook' for 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Two other papers were delivered at the 'International Consortium of Experiential Learning' (ICEL) conferences in New Zealand in 2000 and Slovenia in 2002, and the eighth paper at National Drama's international drama-in-education conference in 2000 at the UK (a UK-based professional association). Of these three papers, one of them has been developed into an article and is being published in a book through ICEL and another is being submitted to the international refereed journal 'Research in Drama-in-education'. The final paper has been submitted for publication in the 'Simulation and Gaming' international journal.

It was through this process of giving papers at conferences and getting them published that I began to construct "opportunities for engaging with actual communities of scholars beyond the *shield* of the university and its pedagogical relationships" (Lee 1998, p. 131), and developed my role as an academic writer and thinker in the field of role-play.

I used the articles and conference papers as a means of exploring different areas that were of interest and which related to the key question I wanted to investigate. This was whether theatre arts literature could provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding how to employ role-play as a learning strategy in adult education.

My initial concern was how to manage the affective aspects of learning in role-play, especially those resulting from the way participants could both involve themselves in, and distance themselves from, the roles they were playing. I wanted to investigate whether Neelands' (1991) model of dramatic conventions, Boal's forum theatre, and the field of dramatherapy could provide solutions to this dilemma. In these early articles I highlighted the problems associated with role-play practice and suggested that simulation, gaming and experience-based learning theory provide a limited basis for helping facilitators overcome these difficulties. I then made the case that role-play should be aligned with theatre arts and that it is therefore appropriate to utilise the literature in this field in order to understand better how to use role-play as a learning system in adult education.

By the time I came to write the thesis I found that my thinking had developed further. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (in Lee 1998, p. 124) suggest: "the process of setting out ideas into sentences of full text can stimulate and develop thinking". It appears that the function of the articles was to help me develop and clarify my thinking around the key research question. This in turn gave me the confidence to take my writing into new directions once I began the thesis.

An annotated bibliography (Appendix 1)

Some of the important issues explored in this thesis can be identified in my first published article, which appeared as a chapter entitled 'Once more with Feeling—identification, representation and the affective aspects of role-play in experience-based education' in 'The International Simulation and Gaming Research Yearbook' (1998). The article raised

the problems that are associated with using role-play in adult education, especially those arising from role-play's capacity to engender strong emotional responses from participants. It considered how to deal with the "emotional aspects of learning which role-play so effectively utilises" (Collier 1998, p. 146). My dissatisfaction with role-play's traditional positioning in the field of simulation and gaming was already evident and I suggested that experience-based education may provide a better background for thinking about how to approach this strategy.

I raised and explored the proposition that role-play needs to return to its theatrical roots. I also introduced the idea that theatre form could provide a means of managing how to both distance and involve participants during a role-play, as is the concept of metaxis which lies at "...the heart of the dramatic paradox of actor and role, of 'me' and 'not me' " (Landy 1993b, p. 30). I concluded that "...an understanding of theatrical form, especially the concepts of identification and representation and metaxis, allows participants and facilitators to use role-play in a way that ensures participants are involved yet critically detached from the roles that they play" (1998, p. 153). Neelands' (1991) dramatic conventions were briefly introduced as a possible model for future practice.

At this stage however, I still viewed role-play primarily as an experiential learning strategy and suggested that the purpose of returning this strategy to its roots in theatre arts is to gain insights into how to approach role-play in experience-based education. This article presented the kernels of the key ideas that would inform my future thesis but in an undeveloped form.

The second article appeared as a chapter in the same publication the following year. It was entitled 'Finding a 'forum' for de-briefing role-play in adult education' (1999). As the title suggests, this article questioned the way in which role-play is traditionally de-briefed when it is part of a simulation or game, or when it is used independently as an experience-based learning approach. De-briefing in this context refers to the space provided for participants to critically reflect on what the learning experience meant to them and make connections between what happened in the simulated exercise and the 'real' world (Van Ments 1983). The debriefing in both these situations usually occurs after the action has been concluded.

Once again, I suggested that the existing models that inform the way role-play is de-briefed in adult education are limited, that they are too facilitator-focused, and that they do not encourage student autonomy in learning.

I also repeated the argument that the solutions to these problems can be found in theatre arts literature, and in this way I reinforced role-play's "potential as an art form" (Collier 1999, p. 208). I presented 'forum theatre' as an alternative model for de-briefing role-play because it "takes account of the interests of the participants as well as those of the facilitator" (Collier 1999, p. 204) and allows participants to learn through action as well as after the action is over.

There is an even stronger emphasis in this article on the need to appreciate role-play's position as a theatre-based learning strategy. In addition I stressed once more that an understanding of theatre form, including the process of metaxis, is important when using role-play as a learning strategy. In this second article I focused on a different area of

practice, the process of de-briefing, but still did this by linking role-play to theatre. I employed forum theatre—a politically radical theatre arts approach—as a framework for better understanding role-play practice in adult education.

The final published article: 'Dramatic Changes—a new action model for role-play practice' (2000) had a significant influence on developing my thinking about the research question. Once again it appeared as a chapter in 'The International Simulation and Gaming Yearbook'. In this piece of writing I attempted to pull together in a coherent whole some of the earlier ideas I had written about. I tried to redefine role-play as a drama-in-education strategy and developed a new model for practice based on Neelands' (1991) dramatic conventions. I argued that experience-based learning could not provide the necessary foundation for understanding how to use role-play in adult education. A practical case-study was presented in order to describe how the 'dramatic action model' I had developed could function. I claimed that the conventions utilised in this model were "not intended to be just a guide to practice but should also provide a new language that can be used to describe the process of learning as it takes place" (2000, p. 57). The model was designed to help facilitators and participants manage involvement and distancing issues in role-play.

This was a bold enterprise but flawed and premature. However, writing about the model and seeing it in a published form allowed me to recognise the limitations of this new framework. It was only later (see Chapter 7 of this thesis) that I was able to analyse these limitations and consider alternatives—including positioning role-play as an arts strategy and a tool for aesthetic learning.

My other papers, some of which were reworked into articles, took me down 'blind alleys' and made me believe that my thesis was about critical reflection in learning rather than exploring the connections between theatre and role-play. It was during this time that I wrote a paper on Mezirow for the National Drama conference held at York, UK in 2000, 'The Shape of Things To Come'. The links I perceived between drama-in-education and his concept of transformative learning did ultimately prove to be important. This paper has informed some of the ideas I discuss in Chapter 8 and elsewhere in the thesis about the kind of learning that role-play can promote.

Another article, 'Teaching-in-role: A Different Approach to Developing Learning through Role-play' (2001), emerged from an application I made for a University of Technology Sydney 'Excellence in Teaching' award, and was seemingly unconnected to my thesis. However it unexpectedly provided the stimulus for thinking about how Heathcote's (1984, 1995) concept of 'the mantle of the expert' could relate to the way I developed my writing through publication.

To sum up, my thesis is an example of scholarly research. However it also includes elements of narrative inquiry, autobiography and reflections on my professional practice—and by doing so embraces Boyer's inclusive view of scholarly research. Boyer, in his definition, recognises that "knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching" (1990, p. 24).

I employed the strategy of publishing articles around issues that interested me and related to my research question. It was through the writing of these articles that I was able to develop my thinking about my key research question. Gradually I was able to adopt the role of

experienced academic writer and perceive myself as "a *subject* within a public community, as a licensed intellectual and above all as a writer" (Lee 1998, p. 131).

Chapter 3.

The problem with role-play

What is role-play and why use it?

Within higher education, role-play can prove a powerful educational medium (Errington 1997, p. 5).

One of the reasons why role-play can be so powerful is its ability to tap into human experience and create learning events as varied as life itself. It does this in its simplest form by asking someone to imagine that they are themselves or another person in a particular situation (Van Ments 1983). Role-play participants then respond 'as if' they were the person they are representing and enact the role. This shift into the world of 'as ifness' in effect separates "the 'inside' of role play from the outside mundane world" (Yardley-Matwiejczuk 1997, p. 77).

Because role-play provides 'a world within a world', it is possible to make mistakes in the fictional world without engendering the kind of major repercussions that would result in the world outside. Yardley-Matwiejczuk reinforces this idea and argues that the great advantage of using a technique in which another world is constructed is that it "purports to limit consequences for participants" (1997, p. 77). This means that role-play not only has the ability to recreate 'real life' situations but also allows participants to explore them in a relatively safe manner.

For example, the person role-playing an interview situation can stumble over answers or even go blank and not answer questions at all, but she will not jeopardise her chances of getting the real job she is preparing for. Because role-play is a fiction—a representation of reality—it provides a potentially safe space in which to be creative and experiment. Participants can spontaneously explore any situation by using imaginative speculation. It is this aspect that puts the 'play' in role-play. Errington stresses the importance of the play element in role-play:

Far from being frivolous, the element of play within learning is designed to encourage students to experiment with roles and situations and try out behavioural possibilities, not readily accessible in life (1997, p. 4).

There is also the potential for role-play to explore situations that exist beyond life experience and move into the realms of fantasy. Participants can create future societies or imagine what it would be like to be survivors on planet Zita (Jones 2002, p. 39). The facilitator's and the

participants' imaginations determine the boundaries for what is possible in role-play.

Role-play encourages participants to play around with concepts of time. Situations that can be explored in role-play are not restricted to the 'here and now' but can span all aspects of time: past, present and future. This allows participants to speculate on how the past may affect the present, or the possible consequences of present actions on the future. Forum Theatre (Boal 1993)—which I shall be looking at in more detail later in Chapter 7—uses different dimensions of time to suggest how people can overcome oppression in their lives. Participants acknowledge their *past* oppression and then by enacting *possible futures* through role-play begin to understand what action needs to be taken *now* in order to bring about the changes they desire. The imaginative world of role-play provides the possibility of time travel in a way that, at present, no time-machine can do.

Boal is aware that role-playing has the potential to expose and challenge power relations in social situations. Saunders reinforces this view by noting that role-playing means that "character parts and power positions are actually lived within a public arena" (1986, p. 78).

There is a three-dimensional aspect to role-play that is rarely found in other learning strategies except practical skills training. Participants have to engage with their environment, move through space and experience the world physically as well as mentally. This engagement of the whole person in a three-dimensional setting reinforces role-play as a strategy that mirrors what we do in 'real life'. Moving through space also allows participants to focus on how they interact physically with others and notice non-verbal as well as verbal cues. As non-verbal

communication is said to convey a majority of the meaning we communicate (Brilhart 1989; Bolton 1993), including this dimension in a learning situation can be seen to have distinct advantages.

Role-play can be employed as an 'on-line' learning strategy, and when this happens its three dimensional aspect is absent (McLachlan & Kirkpatrick, 2001, 2002, 2005). Students are given a context such as the Middle East and can adopt the roles of Israeli and Palestine stakeholders, so they can explore political problems in a more realistic fashion.

Some of the features that I mentioned when referring to role-play as a teaching approach also relate to role-play on-line. For example, participants have the opportunity to respond 'as if' they are themselves or someone else in a particular situation, and explore what it feels like to be in that context.

The on-line form of role-play not only lacks the three-dimensional, physical presence of a face-to-face role-play enactment, but also does not usually operate in the dramatic moment of 'now time'. This is when the role-play action appears to be happening in the present moment and as such contains a powerful theatrical dynamic that commands the attention of an audience. Participants on-line do not have the same focus on time and place. Instead, they have the option of contributing to the scenario in any place and at any time they like.

Being physically present in a role-play and operating in dramatic time are integral to the theatrical nature of role-play. This, I will argue, has a crucial impact on how role-play can be utilised as an educational

approach and on the kind of learning it can generate. Consequently, I see on-line role-play as an impoverished form of this strategy.

The facilitation of on-line role-play also raises ethical problems for me. This is because the disparate nature of on-line role-play and its lack of a cohesive form makes it difficult for the facilitator to monitor the interactions that take place, and to check if students are being harmed. On-line role-play limits the range of strategies that can be used to ameliorate any harm that might occur. This is because of its lack of a complete theatre form. I will be arguing that it is this manipulation of theatre form that protects and guides students in a role-play.

I explore the issue of what role-play can offer learners when it is viewed as a theatre arts strategy in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. I believe that on-line role-play, for the reasons mentioned above, cannot offer this possibility – and for this reason I do not include it in my analysis of role-play in adult education.

In role-play participants are not expected to demonstrate the finely honed skills of an actor, to project their voice over a sustained period of time or to develop a complex character. Errington insists that “the purposes of role-play are in no way concerned with putting on a theatrical performance” (1997, p. 4). Instead, participants in a role-play are asked to consciously do something that they usually do spontaneously as part of their usual social interaction.

Role-play, therefore, is concerned with the spontaneous exploration of the social roles that we adopt in our everyday lives (Van Ments 1983). It capitalises on the way we change our language and behaviour

according to the social situations we encounter. As Clark and Goode observe:

Thus any individual is capable of drawing upon a wide range of roles to create the situational identity...which matches the dictates of social expectation and context (1996, p. 4).

For example I do not use the same language and treat my students the same way as I would my mother; the roles of university lecturer and that of daughter require subtly different patterns of interaction. Role-play encourages us to examine the social roles we employ in our everyday lives, and analyse how they can affect our interactions with different people in different situations.

Participants can also utilise their observation of the roles others are employing but which are not in their personal repertoire, such as doctor or judge, and try these roles out for themselves. This exploration of different roles can help participants “compare and contrast positions taken on issues” and “develop empathetic understanding” (Errington 1997, p. 6 & 8).

Errington, identifies other reasons for using role-play in Higher Education (1997, p. 5-9). These are to:

- demonstrate acquired knowledge, skills or abilities
- demonstrate the practical integration of knowledge
- apply knowledge to the solution of problems
- make abstract problems more concrete
- speculate on the uncertainties surrounding knowledge

- involve students in direct, experiential learning
- have students manipulate knowledge in dynamic ways
- promote lifelong learning
- learn about selective areas of curriculum content
- facilitate the legitimate expression for students' attitudes and feelings
- provide immediate feedback for student and teacher

Given the above arguments for using role-play, it is surprising how little it appears to be employed as a learning strategy in higher education and in adult education generally. And if it is employed, it is disturbing to observe how ineffectively it is often used.

I have noted there are a limited number of books written specifically about role-play in adult education (Errington 1997; Van Ments 1983; Yardley-Matwiejczuk 1997). When attending conferences that focus on simulation and gaming and experience-based learning, I have noted how only a few of the papers focus on role-play as a specialist field of study. There is some indication of role-play being used as a tool for workplace learning but not always successfully (Smigiel 1995).

The rise in competency-based standards in the workplace has led to an interest in using role-play as an assessment tool with adult learners in government, community and business organisations (Smigiel 1995, 1996). This is because competency-based training is interested in the holistic assessment of observable behaviours in a workplace setting (Gonczi 1992). When it is logistically impossible or unsafe to assess competence in the workplace then role-play can provide a simulated alternative. Police training officers could role-play to demonstrate their ability to breathalyse a driver.

In Smigiel's research, which focuses on drama strategies being employed in the workplace, the examples she studied were primarily examples of role-play. She suggests that in the five cases that were studied participants' engagement in the role-play was very limited. The role-plays were more like a skills demonstration. Participants found it hard to shift into the imaginative world of responding 'as if' they were in role and were heard to comment "I can't pretend this" (Smigiel 1995, p. 8).

Cherrington and Van Ments were so concerned by the perceived lack of interest in experiential learning—including role-play in adult, continuing and higher education in the UK, that they conducted research into the use of experiential learning techniques in that sector. The results, which were by no means conclusive, showed that role-play was identified as an experiential learning technique and was being used or had been used, by two thirds of the sixty-four respondents "at some time" (Cherrington & Van Ments 1993, p. 302). There was, however, some confusion about what exactly constituted experiential learning, and the tutors who did use this approach lacked confidence in their ability to use it effectively as a learning approach. Many noted that the educational environment was changing and that "teaching methods may become more restricted as a result" (1993, p. 301). As the Cherrington and Van Ments article notes, it is hard to estimate the precise extent to which experiential methods, including role-play, are employed, but it does not appear to be flourishing.

One of the concerns voiced by respondents in the Cherrington and Van Ments research project was that "students could be upset and put into states of anxiety in experiential situations without proper consideration and preparation" (1993, p. 305).

This comment echoes the frequently given excuse for not using role-play—or using it rarely—as a learning method: that it is not a ‘safe’ strategy. Jarvis notes that role-play “is an approach that has difficulties, so it should not be used carelessly or thoughtlessly” (1995, p. 128). Descriptions of role-play of the kind put forward by Taylor and Walford reinforce the idea that it is a risky learning approach:

What may happen in a role-play is anyone’s guess; there are no formal restraints on the situation (1978, p. 9).

There is a fear that a role-play can run out of control and the learning possibilities can be lost in the ensuing chaos. The fear is of two kinds. First, the fear that participants either refuse to participate and second, that they become emotionally distressed (Cryer 1988; Jones 1989, 1994).

Reluctance to participate is often the result of participants not being able to make the imaginative leap which takes them from the ‘here and now’ into the world of the imagination, the world of ‘what if?’. They see role-play as being linked to childhood games and therefore taking part in one would be demeaning and embarrassing. Participants argue that role-play is not real enough and does not reflect how things are in the ‘real world’ and they are therefore reluctant to engage in it. In the second case, emotional distress seems to arise from the opposite problem, where participants become too involved in their role and the situation they are exploring. They start to believe that their imaginative enactment is real and get lost in the emotions they experience as a result.

I have sometimes encountered these problems when facilitating role-play and over the years have tried to find solutions. The literature on

experience-based learning or in the specialist books on role-play have not helped, so I have found myself returning to drama and theatre. These areas have provided me with a wealth of literature on role theory and role-play and have enabled me to more adequately theorise my practice.

I will now examine in more detail the problems associated with role-play and evaluate the solutions offered by different writers on this topic. I will demonstrate how an analysis of drama and theatre arts literature supplies us with a different way of thinking about role-play in adult education. I will also provide a rationale for connecting these two potentially disparate areas. This will allow me to argue for a new approach for role-play in adult education—one that provides a clear framework for practice by acknowledging that role-play is connected to a rich theatre arts tradition.

Problems of using role-play in adult education

There do not seem to be many published examples of problematic role-play situations in adult education. Many of the examples that are cited come from simulation and gaming literature, as this is where most interest in role-play as a teaching method appears to reside.

Jones believes there is a lack of examples of problem sessions because most writers want to emphasise what constitutes good practice rather than give examples of pedagogic failure. Facilitators feel insecure about using what is often perceived as a 'radical' methodology, and experience a need to convince colleagues that role-plays and

simulations are valid learning strategies. This results in problems being “swept under the carpet” (Jones 1997, p. 13).

Collier (1998, 1999, 2000), Cryer (1988a, 1988b) Errington (1997), Jones (1985, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1994, 1997a 1997b, 2002), Saunders (1985,1986), Taylor and Walford (1978) and Van Ments (1983, 1992) have all written about the problems associated with role-play, and have provided rationales for why these difficulties exist.

Some examples of problems that arise in simulation and games

Jones, who has written more than most about this subject, is a practitioner who deals specifically with the damage caused by simulations and games. The problem he returns to is the lack of clarity in the way simulations and games are structured and defined.

He defines simulations as being “a working representation of reality” and distinguishes them from games in which “one or more players compete or cooperate for pay-offs according to a set of rules” (1986, p. 49). Role-play is only seen as a component of these educational strategies and is rarely mentioned specifically. For Jones, role-play has a very precise meaning, which is linked to ‘play-acting’ and ‘informal drama’. Both these activities are seen as being different from simulation. However, when role-play is “functional with the participants behaving with professional intent, and if it is not an isolated episode, and if the teacher does not interfere in the action, then it is a simulation” (1989, p. 165). In other words, when these conditions apply, simulation and role-play are the same thing.

Blake, in her study of role-play, also concludes that role-play “is so interwoven with those of gaming and simulation techniques that any attempt to distinguish definitively between the three is likely to be untenable” (1987, p. 110). Crookall, Oxford and Saunders reinforce the close connection between simulation and role-play:

Role-play is seen as simply one aspect of simulation; simulation may not always incorporate role-play, but a role-play is always a simulation (1987, p. 147).

According to these arguments, simulations and games are activities that usually include role-play as an integral part of their structure. I also believe this to be the case, though I will be arguing later that role-play should not be viewed as a minor element, but as a crucial part of simulation and gaming strategy.

The kind of problems Jones identifies in simulations and games are extremely relevant to the problems experienced in role-play when it is presented as a discrete strategy. He worries about participants who get too involved in their roles, become over-emotional and find it difficult to separate what is happening in the simulation with ‘real life.’ He mirrors my concerns about participants over-identifying with a role in a role-play situation.

In order to clarify the nature of the problems that Jones highlights, I will give a couple of specific examples of what he sees as being problematic in a game or simulation. The competitive element in a game or simulation can change the dynamic of the role-play that occurs within it, but the problems that emerge from these situations still relate closely to the ones I identified earlier as being particular to role-play.

Jones (1989, 1990, 1994, 1997a) gives some detailed examples of role-playing disasters. The first one I will examine here relates to the game 'Prisoners' Dilemma'. In this game two prisoners are jointly accused of an unspecified crime. They have to decide separately whether to plead guilty or not guilty to this crime and are not permitted to consult each other during this process. They are told however, before they decide on their pleas, that if they both plead not guilty they receive a lesser sentence than if they both plead guilty. However if they plead differently, the person who pleaded guilty will receive a lighter sentence (because they have become a 'police informant'), and the person pleading not guilty receives a heavier sentence. As a game, the object of Prisoners' Dilemma is to win.

When observing how this game is actually played, Jones notes that participants became very involved in their roles. They used emotional blackmail to keep fellow prisoners 'in line', threatening that decisions made in the game could affect those who made them "for the rest of their life" (1994, p. 15). Some participants chose to leave where the game had taken place by the back door so they did not have "to see 'the sons of bitches' who double-crossed them" as they left (1994, p.15). Many participants became very angry during the activity and in some cases even tearful. The feelings of aggression that the game engendered affected personal relationships outside the learning experience, with participants who had been friends refusing to speak to each other and some blaming the facilitator for setting up such a volatile situation for the group. As for the learning that emerged from role-playing prisoners within this game, Jones notes that participants discovered how to dislike each other and how to carry this hatred with them from the imaginative to the real world.

Jones gives other examples of participants who so strongly identified with their roles that they were prepared to engage in the kind of anti-social behaviour that alienated them from the group they were working with. In a second case, Jones reported observing that participants involved in the trading game 'Star Power' resorted to physical violence in order to assert their power and gain maximum trading advantage over other traders. The rules of this exercise actually encourage this kind of ruthless competitive behaviour, as one group (the most successful traders) are allowed to determine the rules of the game after a period of time. The idea is to highlight how those in power can oppress others to gain advantage for themselves. In this case, however, there was a real danger that participants adopting the roles of traders and law-makers could have physically harmed each other. They were engaged in a struggle that went beyond the game itself.

The main problems identified in the literature fit into three broad areas :

- the damage caused by inappropriate categorisation and structural flaws
- problems with motivation and issues of engagement, and disengagement concerns about play-acting and inappropriate facilitator intervention
- concerns about play-acting and inappropriate facilitator intervention.

I will now examine in more detail how these problems are presented in the literature on role-play. Then I will question the validity of using these arguments to criticise role-play as a 'problematic learning strategy'.

The damage caused by inappropriate categorisation and structural flaws

The examples Jones provides for us here appear to show participants who have become too deeply engaged in their roles and find it hard to separate reality from fiction. The explanation Jones proposes for all these disasters does not however relate to the roles played, but to 'sloppy' definitions—the "floating terminology" of what constitutes a simulation or a game (1997, p. 13). The problem he identifies is concerned with the way the terms such as 'simulation' and 'game' are used interchangeably, although he believes they belong to distinctly different categories. He also highlights how some simulations and games are structured to include elements from each, which is confusing for participants and facilitators alike. In Jones's terms the examples given above are neither a pure game nor a simulation, but a mismatch of the two: a simulation/game. As far as Jones is concerned:

Games and simulations are incompatible because the motives (duties, responsibilities and ethics) are incompatible. In games (of skill) the players have a duty to try and win. In simulations the participants have a duty to fulfill their roles (functions, jobs) to the best of their ability, having regard to circumstances and ethics of the real world (1997, p. 11).

In other words, participants think they are playing a game and that certain sets of behaviours will be expected, for example that there will be rules that will be adhered to and they should aim to win. They then find that their actions are being judged by the ethical values of the world outside the game and feel they have been tricked. The participants in Prisoners' Dilemma and Star Power acted ruthlessly in

order to win the game according to the rules set up by the facilitator, only to find out later in the debriefing that they were being judged as if they had behaved ruthlessly in a 'real life' situation. Trust between the facilitator and the group and between the participants themselves disappeared. It is no wonder then that "it is all too easy to suggest that all interactive events are suspect and dangerous" (Jones 1997, p. 13).

Jones claims that it is the clash of these different value systems within the one exercise that provokes a strong emotional reaction in participants and results in confusion about the purpose of the exercise. He uses the term 'ambivalent' to describe these situations where "incompatible methodologies are operating simultaneously" (1994, p. 12). However, Jones concedes that some simulations are purposely designed to be ambivalent in order to highlight a specific learning goal. For example Star Power, which has many of the characteristics of a simulation, has to have a competitive gaming element built into it to reflect how a capitalist economy functions. However, he suggests that it is only by a facilitator recognising and responding to these ambivalents that participants can be protected from the potential emotional damage they can cause. If the ambivalent factors are ignored problems will arise.

Problems with motivation and issues of engagement and disengagement

Cryer is also interested in the disconcerting events that can occur in games, simulation and workshops but her focus is more on how to motivate and engage participants rather than how to disengage them from a role. She describes the ways that participants can disrupt

activities through “loud argument or cries of unfairness” or by the way they “flounce out of the room; or even burst into tears” (1988b, p. 163).

She classifies these behaviours as ‘rebellion’ and develops a model based on a variation of ‘catastrophe theory’ and Herzberg’s ‘two-factor motivational theory’, from which she develops a means of moving participants towards the opposite state which she terms ‘high commitment.’ This high commitment is characterised by “participants throwing their energies and enthusiasm into what they are doing” and being fully engaged in the role-play (1988b, p. 164).

Finding ways to motivate students and prevent them from becoming disengaged because the role-play is “boring and unreal” are the chief concerns of Eden and Fineman (1986, p. 3). Their suggested solution is the use of open role-plays rather than simulations. They see simulations as being highly structured with pre-determined, particularised settings. The learning issue set-up by the simulation design—and even the possible outcomes—are pre-determined to a great extent by the simulation designer. They argue that these factors can de-motivate participants and prevent them from engaging fully.

Open role-plays, in contrast to simulations, offer more choice to participants. They can choose a situation and roles relevant to their workplace and determine what problem needs to be solved there. They then spontaneously role-play the situation. The solution will not necessarily be clear to either the participants or the facilitator and will only emerge (if at all) through the dynamic of the role-play.

Van Ments (1992) also believes that role-play situations must be relevant if participants are to overcome any initial resistance to this

strategy. He argues that the way to do this is to let the participants develop their own situations and role-play them, so he appears to favour the open role-play model too as a way of engaging and motivating participants.

All these writers suggest motivation plays an important part in the engagement of participants in role-play, but each suggest that different motivational factors have an impact on practice.

Concerns about play-acting, inappropriate facilitator intervention and de-briefing

Both Van Ments and Jones recognise that 'play acting' and a lack of proper de-briefing can be a problem in role-play and simulation. They agree that that participants' behaviour "should be dictated entirely by the needs of the situation they find themselves in and only constrained by the abilities or authority of the character they are playing" (Van Ments 1992, p. 85). In addition they concur that theatrical mannerisms and character development are not appropriate for role-plays or simulations. Van Ments however shows a more ambivalent attitude towards the place of theatre in role-play. He argues that it is related to the theatrical art of improvisation and that we all "play out the self-image we carry around with us" (1996, p.128) in a similar way to actors when they project themselves into a part.

In regard to the role of the facilitator, two particular areas are seen as potentially problematic: interventions and de-briefing. In simple terms the problem for interventions is 'too much' and de-briefing 'too little'. Jones and Van Ments both believe that participants should be given a

significant level of autonomy when engaged in a role-play or simulation. The danger therefore, resides in the facilitator intervening too much.

As far as Jones is concerned, facilitators are “invisible” and should not intervene in a simulation unless absolutely necessary (1989, p. 163). He gives an example of how tutor intervention ruined a management simulation, because the tutors took over and alienated other participants through their interference and play-acting behaviour (Jones 1990).

Van Ments views the role of the facilitator as being more pro-active. He suggests their role is to “provide a variety of support and advice” (1992, p. 87). He even proposes that when problems arise in a role-play the best strategy for the facilitator is to intervene and interrupt the proceedings, discuss the difficulties that have emerged, and then let the participants go back into the role-play. So whilst ideas of participant autonomy are an important aspect of role-play and simulation, there are different perspectives on how much tutor intervention is deemed appropriate to prevent problems occurring.

In regard to the process of debriefing, Jones and Van Ments agree strongly that often too little time and effort is put into this stage of the role-play or simulation event, and that this can cause problems (Jones 1989; Van Ments 1983, 1992, 1994). Van Ments refers to debriefing as “a major subject in its own right” (1992, p. 87) and suggests facilitators should carefully consider the purpose and structure of the debrief, as well as their role within it. Jones points out that in general debriefings are “too short, too unimaginative, and too teacher-dominated” (1989, p. 166). The debriefing session is seen as a space for reflection after the

learning activity and a place where connections can be made between what happened in the role-play and simulation, and the participants' experience and the world at large (Van Ments 1983). If too little time is set aside for de-briefing, the participants can finish a role-play or simulation activity without having a clear idea of the significance of the experience. Saunders highlights the effect this can have on participants.

At the end of the day some students may still be wondering why they are being asked to pretend, and whether there is some other clandestine purpose for the exercise (1985, p. 6).

An alternative view of why problems occur in role-play in adult education

Whilst Jones's analysis of the failure of simulation/games has some convincing aspects to it—such as the clash of values within a simulation—it also has areas of weakness. His proposal that loose definitions of what constitutes a game or simulation are problematic has been challenged by Leigh (2003) who argues that clear categorization in this area is impossible. It seems, therefore, that the question of how to categorise games, simulations and other activities that come under the umbrella term 'simulation' has been, and still is, an area of strong contention. This question is tangential to my other concerns however, and I shall only cover it where it is relevant to understanding the nature of role-play in adult education.

The term 'simulation' is a slippery one, and the more that specialists in this field (Klabbers 1999; Ellington 1982; Jones 1986) have tried to neatly define and categorise games, simulation, role-play and other interactive

exercises of a similar type, the more it becomes clear that they have floundered. There are just too many differences of opinion and apparent exceptions to the rules.

Christopher (1983) and Taylor and Walford (1978) admit that the categorisation of activities into either a simulation or game is “not clear-cut” and that “definitions in this field are still a matter for considerable dispute” (Taylor and Walford 1978, p. 15). Christopher and Smith (1987) suggest that these activities are similar in essence, though the learning purpose they are used for might differ. Saunders also notes that the term ‘game’ and ‘simulation’ are used interchangeably, though a game may be “more closely linked with elements of competition and winning” (1986, p. 77). A game will be more closely aligned to a simulation if it has a strong contextual element where one situation is set-up to resemble another, as happens in Prisoners’ Dilemma and Star Power. Therefore it is extremely difficult to compartmentalise simulations and games, as there will usually be some seepage between the two.

It is possible that the problems emerging from simulations and games are not necessarily simply to do with the way they are designed or categorised. Support for this case can be found in my account of how a participant responded to an extended role-play (Collier 2000), which is described and analysed further in Chapter 7. No competitive element was evident in that role-play and therefore there was no obvious ambivalent embedded in the structure of the exercise. In spite of this, the kind of problems that surfaced for Jones in the examples examined earlier were also evident in this role-play.

Briefly, in this case, the participant had taken on the role of a long term resident about to be evicted from a leased property because the landlord had decided to sell, owing to the 'gentrification' of an inner-city neighbourhood. The student closely identified with the tenant and got angry when she attended a role-played meeting of interested parties and received little sympathy. Her anger made her "storm from the room" and withdraw from the role-play and the de-briefing discussion that ensued. In this situation the student was "visibly distressed" and unable to distinguish between the fiction of her role and the reality of her feelings (Collier, 2000, p. 48).

The student's response was similar to that experienced by some participants in *Starpower* and *Prisoners' Dilemma*, yet there was no obvious competitive element in the activity. This makes Jones's argument that the unhealthy hybrid—the 'simulation/game'—is the cause of all the problems less plausible.

I propose that the competitive element in both *Starpower* and *Prisoners' Dilemma* was the stimulus that engaged the students and encouraged them to identify strongly with their roles. Both simulations were complex, and the roles participants had to adopt within these simulations had to be sustained over a significant period of time. It was the heady mix of these features that actually encouraged participants to get even deeper into their roles than they would normally have done. The competition provided the lure for strong engagement in the simulation, and the roles provided the medium for that engagement. Consequently participants seem to have muddled the boundary between the imagined world of the simulation and the real world, and responded to the simulation as if it were a real situation.

This, however, does not explain why similar problems occurred in the non-competitive role-play I have just described. The participant playing the resident still became over-involved in her role, so it appears that close identification and emotional involvement can also happen without the presence of a gaming element. If this is the case, it could not be either the structure of the game/simulation or the imprecise use of terminology that caused this problem to occur.

I do not believe that the problems in the “gentrification of a neighbourhood” (Collier, 2000) role-play example can be explained by any of the perspectives presented so far. The problems that emerged in this role-play were not concerned with motivation, even though this was a structured rather than an open role-play. The participants were already committed and engaged in the role-play; if anything they were over-committed and too engaged in their roles. Facilitator intervention was minimal and was not an obvious factor that led to the participant’s sudden outburst. Lack of debriefing was problematic, but given that the participant had already withdrawn from the role-play there was little that could have been done.

Cryer (1988a, 1988b) suggests how to motivate students so they engage fully in a role-play. However, she does not deal with participants who get so involved that they find it hard to separate fact from fiction.

I propose that there are better explanations than the ones already examined of why participants lose themselves in their roles and forget the artifice of the simulated activity. I shall therefore present these explanations and describe how they can account for the problems that occur in role-play.

Whilst role-play encourages participants to engage in imaginative identification with a person in a particular situation, there are clear boundaries that need to be reinforced so that the different worlds of artifice and reality do not become blurred, causing the problems Jones identified in his simulation examples.

It is the imaginative process, the movement into the world of 'as if', that engages participants in the role-play experience. At the same time, the form of the enactment is a constant reminder of the artificial nature of the situation, making participants aware that role-play is not 'real life', and allows for a sense of detachment to exist as well. And it is a lack of an understanding of these crucial elements of form—elements that are inherently dramatic—that is at the crux of the problems occurring in role-play and related activities.

It is clear from Jones's definition of role-play that when it is situated in the simulation and gaming areas, its dramatic, imaginative characteristics are minimized—whereas its functional, lifelike qualities are emphasised. It is this reliance on role-play's ability to replicate 'real life' that persuades students to identify too closely with their roles. Because role-play's dramatic nature is not stressed, there is no opportunity to balance the imaginary creation of an apparently real situation with the distancing artifice of dramatic form.

Jones even goes so far as to claim that role-play is only a valid part of simulation if it is *not* to do with drama. I believe this is open to challenge. Once participants enter a game or simulation, they are already moving into the fictional world of responding 'as if' they were a particular person in a specific situation. It is impossible to perform "functional roles and behave with professional intent" unless this

transformation happens. This shift of consciousness, this act of the imagination, is inherently dramatic (1989, p. 160).

Unlike Jones, I do not believe it is a mistake to see simulations as being related to drama. As I shall demonstrate later, an acceptance of this relationship does not necessarily lead to “play-acting” or “playing it for laughs or for dramatic effect” (1989, p. 165). However, I do believe that it is dangerous to ignore the idea that participants unavoidably move into the world of imaginative enactment during a role-play.

Jones is unwilling to admit that fictional representation is a crucial part of what occurs in a simulation or a game when role-play is a part of the activity. It is hard to think of simulations and games that do not require some adoption of role, however superficial – although computer games and simulation do not include the physical enactment of roles. Even the well-known board game Monopoly requires those playing to adopt the role of landlord or traveller – and capitalist of course!

Jones claims that it is important to realise that “in an educational simulation the participants do not simulate; behaviour is real, not pretend” (1989, p. 164). Again I disagree. When participants get involved in a role they may indeed feel that it is real and what they are doing in the situation is wholly credible. In reality however, they are involved in creating fiction and it is when the facilitator and participants in role-play situations forget this that problems arise.

The problem of situating role-play within adult education

The problems I have identified are linked to the way role-play in adult education is situated in the areas of simulation and games and divorced from drama and theatre arts. I will now briefly explain why this is significant.

In Chapter 1, I mentioned role-play's links to experience-based learning, also known as experiential learning. This is an area of adult education that I now need to investigate further, because role-play, simulation and games are all conventionally included under this umbrella. Whilst it is not possible to look in detail at the history and development of experience-based learning, it is important to focus on the positioning of role-play within experience-based learning, as well as its relationship to simulations and games. The positioning of role-play within experience-based learning has given it some useful theoretical foundations, but has also limited the way it is perceived and utilised in adult education.

The limitations of positioning role-play within experience-based learning

Trying to define experiential or experience-based learning is extremely difficult. Boud suggests that experiential learning is 'multifaceted' and involves much more than the engagement of a person with an extant body of knowledge:

learning is all around us, it shapes and helps us create our lives—who we are, what we do. It involves dealing with

complex and intractable problems, it requires personal commitment, it utilizes interaction with others, it engages our emotions and feelings, all of which are inseparable from the influence of context and culture (1993, pp. 1 & 7).

This is such a broad definition that it could refer to almost all kinds of learning. In fact Henry argues that because experience is such a general term, it is clear that many people argue that all learning is experiential. She notes that the term 'experiential learning' has been used eclectically "to refer to very different kinds of learning goals, experiences and outcomes" (1996, p. 25). Saddington describes this field as 'vast':

If we look at the range, everything from farming to conflict resolution; from assessment to youth development; from practical skills training to theoretical models; from personal growth to workplace training and development. All are labelled experiential learning – all presented as being part of the experiential learning family (2000, p. 2).

Henry attempts to clarify what experiential learning stands for in adult education by analysing the responses of 52 tutors from colleges and universities in America, Europe, Australasia and Africa. All the respondents to her questionnaire had attended the first International Conference on Experiential Learning and were asked to offer an explanation of what they perceived experiential learning to be and to describe the kind of experiential learning they facilitated.

The results of Henry's research reinforce the idea that experiential learning means very different things to different people and establishes that variations in thinking are often linked to the kinds of context in

which people were operating. Nonetheless, despite the diversity of the responses, she was still able to identify some characteristics. One of the hallmarks of the experiential learning approach is its “determination not to neglect the human side of learning and to acknowledge the role of affect and conation” (1996, p. 27). Other characteristics Henry sees as significant are summarised below:

- the promotion of active student involvement in the learning process
- the development of student autonomy
- interest in the student’s past experience and how this affects the way they perceive the world
- concern with the education of the whole person: their personal development, including their ability to act autonomously
- valuing feelings as well as cognitive knowledge
- learning should be relevant to what is going on in the ‘real world’, and the informal learning that takes place outside academic institutions should be valued as much as the learning that takes place within them (1996, p. 27)

These characteristics connect strongly with Boud et al’s propositions about learning from experience. They see learning as a holistic process and propose that experience is “the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning” (1993, p. 8). They agree that learners use this experience to actively construct new meaning. They contend that the emotions are an integral element of learning to the extent that a “denial of feelings is denial of learning” (p. 14). In addition, Boud et al. stress that the learning context is of vital importance and is socially and culturally constructed. The social/political dimension of experience is reinforced by Brah and Hoy who argue that you cannot “separate individual

experience as independent from the power relationships in society” (1996, p. 73).

A majority of Henry’s respondents also argued that in order for experiential learning to occur, it was not enough just to experience something, but the ‘experiencer’ had “to consciously realise the *value* of that experience” (Henry 1996, p. 28). For true experiential learning to have occurred there had to be space for a period of reflection afterwards and even a chance for further action and experimentation to take place. Boud and Walker reinforce the importance of reflection by commenting that “it is this working with experience that is important in learning” (1995, p. 33).

The reflective element is one factor included in Lewin’s (1973) cyclical model of the experiential learning process (see Fig. 1).

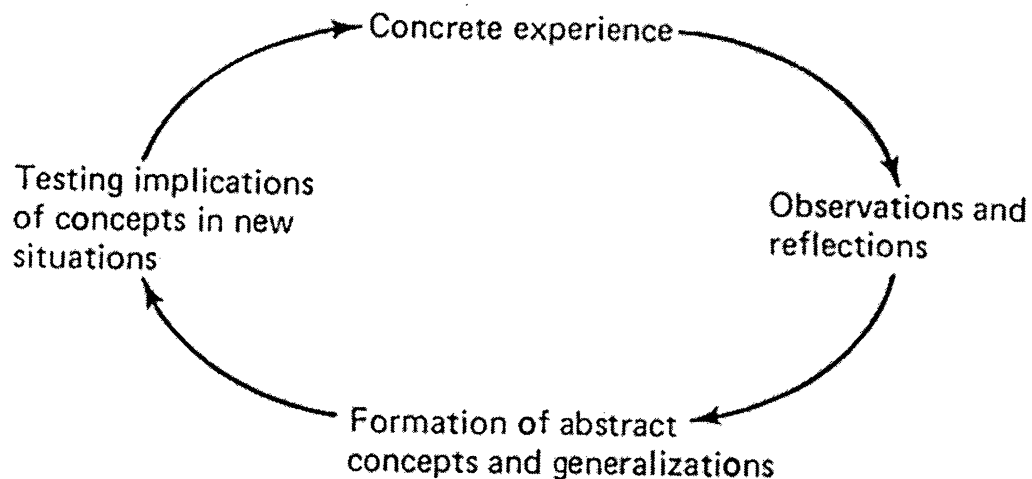


Fig. 1: Lewin's Cycle (Kolb 1984)

This model was influenced by Dewey's ideas (1938) of learning through experience and has been further developed by (Kolb 1984), who included the effects that different knowledge forms and individual learning styles have on the process. The cycle can be accessed at any point but is usually depicted as beginning at the concrete experience stage. The idea conveyed by Lewin's cycle is that concrete experience forms the basis of learning, but only becomes valid once this experience is carefully observed and reflected upon. It is only then that the learner can begin to develop new ideas and concepts relating to that experience and then test them out to see if they are valid (Kolb 1984). I will give an example of how this would work in a role-play situation.

Suppose that an adult student is trying to learn how to be assertive with her colleagues at work. She has noticed that she is being expected to do more travelling interstate because she is not married and has no children. However, she has an elderly mother who has become increasingly dependent on her, so being frequently away from home is impacting on her personal relationships.

The student role-plays an interaction she wants to have with her colleagues in which she practices using assertive 'I' statements (concrete experience). Another student observes the interaction. Once the role-play is over, the student who was trying to be assertive gets feedback on her interaction from both the person role-playing her colleague and from the observer. She describes how she felt about what happened and refers back to the information she was given on assertiveness to check her understanding of it (observations and reflection). After doing this she realises the importance of empathy and discovers that she might have been more effective if she had shown some understanding of her colleague's situation before launching into assertive 'I' statements. This

new understanding develops from and is shared amongst the group (formation of abstract concepts and generalisations). The group changes roles and another member role-plays another situation relevant to them, where they have to be assertive. This time however, they try to bring in the empathic element to see if it makes a difference to the assertive message (testing implications of concepts in new situations). There is another 'concrete experience'. And so the cycle continues.

Henry recognises that the experiential learning cycle is "by far the most popular" of the theories on offer (1996, p. 26). She acknowledges, however, that it could be seen as a description of learning in general and that it overlaps with other models of learning, such as those proposed by Dewey (1938) and Carhuff (1969). It does appear that Lewin's cycle has strong resonances with the scientific experimental approach to learning, and his description of it as the laboratory method reinforces this. I would argue however that even if the model lacks originality, it still privileges 'concrete experience' (at the centre of learning) and this does separate this approach from others that are more interested in learning as an abstract, cognitive exercise.

It would appear at first sight that the characteristics identified by Henry, Boud, Cohen and Walker, and Lewin's experiential learning model provide a useful framework for role-play. Role-play would appear to fit quite comfortably into the experiential learning category because it is a holistic learning approach. It has both the ability to mirror what happens in the 'real world' and an interest in human interaction. The role-play example that I provided also demonstrates how well-adapted this strategy is to this experiential learning approach. The concept of student autonomy has already been shown to be an important part of role-play practice (Van Ments 1983; Jones 1989), and

the importance of reflection is emphasised as an important part of the de-briefing process. Henry believes, however, that problems begin to emerge in relation to different understandings of experiential learning when theory is put into practice.

Whilst I agree with Henry that differences inherent in experiential learning come to the fore when it is practised, I would argue that problems to do with practice do in fact occur because of differing ideas about what should be learnt in experiential learning. Warner Weil & McGill suggest as much when they identify four 'villages' of experiential learning to encompass a "spectrum of meanings, practices and ideologies" that combine to create the field of experiential learning (1996, p. 3). These 'villages' represent the four different *purposes* of experiential educational practice: the accreditation of prior learning (APL), curricular development in post-school education, community action and social change, and personal growth and development.

There are connections here with three of Newman's (1993) adult education traditions described in Chapter 1. The most obvious are the links between the psychotherapy tradition and the personal growth village, and between the community development tradition and the community action and social change village. The accreditation of prior learning village can be interpreted as valuing an individual's personal growth, but is also concerned with the recognition of competency, so it could be seen as being associated with the mechanistic tradition. Three adult education perspectives in one educational approach are likely to breed a diversity of aims and also philosophical confusion. I will argue that it is the lack of a clear and coherent philosophical foundation that leads to confusion about how experiential learning should be used in practice.

Philosophical confusion

It would seem that experiential learning is deeply influenced by Dewey's philosophy of education (1916, 1934, 1938)—a view that is primarily scientific and pragmatic. In 'Democracy and Education' (1916) Dewey provided what he termed a "technical definition" of education as "the reconstruction and reorganisation of experiences which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (in Peters 1981, p. 74). This definition emphasises the centrality of experience to learning. As far as Dewey (1916) was concerned:

An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance (1997, p.144).

This idea is echoed in Boud et al's first proposition that "experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning" (1993, p. 8).

Other aspects of Dewey's philosophy of education also relate to the characteristics of experiential education. His valuing of informal learning and his proposition that there should be "no separation between learning and life" (Peters 1981, p. 79) fit well into the experiential education framework, as do his ideas of student autonomy in learning and the utilisation of group problem solving as a way of developing critical intelligence. The focus Dewey puts on group and social learning is a rejection of the proposition that the aim of education is purely to develop the individual person. His ideas of individual growth were more scientific in nature, and focused on a growth "in

practical and critical thought, which opens up the possibility of more control of the environment” (Peters 1983, p. 75).

In ‘Democracy and Education’ Dewey claims that:

And the idea of perfecting an ‘inner’ personality is a sure sign of social divisions. What is called inner is simply that which does not connect with others – which is not capable of free and full communication (Dewey 1916, p. 143).

He challenges the assertion that each individual’s mind is “complete in isolation from everything else” (Dewey 1997, p.305). In Dewey’s work we do not easily find any foundation for the personal growth element that is such an important aspect of the experiential approach. Humanistic psychology provides that element.

Education that draws on humanistic psychology focuses on the development of the whole person, the goal being to empower them to reach ‘self-actualisation’. This involves “the reaching of one’s potential in intellect, abilities and emotionally and spiritually through personal choice” (Russell 1999, p. 107). In terms of learning, working towards self-actualisation is about helping people to become the best they are able to become (Rogers 1969).

Humanistic education seeks to ensure the emotional well-being of a student. Rogers, one of the chief proponents of humanistic education, explains how this approach focuses on “how learning seems and feels from the inside” (1983, p. 133). It uses students’ interests as the starting point for learning and aims to develop student confidence and autonomy. In the humanistic model of education the teacher is a

facilitator of learning who demonstrates qualities such as “genuineness, prizing and empathy” (1983, p. 135). These are all elements that are seen to be associated with experiential learning.

Dewey did propose that tutors should give up “the position of external boss or dictator” and adopt the role of a “leader of group activities” (1938, p. 59). However, in Dewey there was more emphasis on the tutor having a significant input in terms of knowledge and subject matter than in Roger’s concept of a facilitator who is “not much interested in instructing another in what she should know or think” (1983, p. 119). Dewey did agree that tutors should also ‘prize’ their students by providing external approval and encouragement, but contrary to the humanistics of the 1960’s he did not see tutors as being responsible for a student’s internal, psychological and emotional development.

Although some of Dewey’s ideas overlap with humanistic views of education, significant differences are also apparent. There is a mismatch between Dewey’s pragmatic, scientific view of education – which Peters likens to “a group of dedicated, problem solving scientists, who were united by their shared concerns and willingness to communicate their findings to each other” (1981, p. 75) – and Roger’s humanist, person-centred, therapeutic approach. Dewey’s perspective may even appear to have some behaviourist leanings, as it stresses how the control of environmental factors can bring about change. The humanist approach to learning has traditionally been viewed as a “paradigm fundamentally opposite to behaviourism” (Russell 1999, p. 106). This means there is a danger that the melding of Dewey’s philosophy and humanist psychology may represent a clash of educational cultures. It is this kind of mismatch that can cause theoretical confusion in the way

experiential learning is theorised, which in turn has profound consequences for the way it is practised.

When the Christian-Marxist perspective of Paulo Freire (Jarvis 1985) is added to the philosophical mix, the experiential learning paradigm becomes even more complex and difficult to define. Freire was honoured at the International Conference for Experiential Learning in Washington, USA in 1993. His perspective of learning has been enormously influential for those who promote experiential learning as a strategy to bring about social change (Brah and Hoy 1996).

Newman notes that Friere's theories remain based on a utopian vision of a society "in which both the oppressors and the oppressed have been liberated from the shackles of their false views of the world" (1993, p. 237). This contrasts with the ideas that Dewey puts forward in 'The School and Society'. Here he presents a more pragmatic view of education as means of social change. Whilst Dewey had a passionate belief that the curriculum should be socially relevant, he seems to be more interested in achieving social integration through the power of readaptation to changing conditions, rather than challenging the existing social and political order in any significant way. His promotion of group co-operation rather than extreme individualism is a way of preparing students for their later role as members of a larger society:

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society, which is worthy, lovely and harmonious (1963, p. 91).

Freire's (1972, 1976, 1985) ideas on political change also differ from those of Rogers. Rogers focuses firstly on individual, personal development. He then sees any further changes as emerging from the empowerment that an individual may have gained from that development. We see here a further case of how experiential learning is trying to marry very different perspectives on the social and political role of education, and pretend that they fit into a comprehensive theoretical framework. The result is more confusion. As Henry remarks:

If we (experiential educators) just had a story that was easier for others to grasp, experiential learning methods might be in much more widespread use than they currently are (1996, p. 36).

Experience-based learning is made up of a rich variety of traditions and offers a range of ways to perceive and approach learning. I would argue, however, that whilst there is wealth in diversity, the uncertain theoretical basis offered by experience-based learning provides unstable foundations for conceptualising and using role-play as a teaching approach in adult education. This theoretical uncertainty leads in turn to a misunderstanding of what role-play is and where it should reside within the boundaries of experience-based learning.

When Henry came to analyse the different types of activities that her respondents believed qualified as experiential, she found they were so diverse, such a "broad church" (1996, p. 29), that she had to find a way of categorising them so they made sense (see Fig. 2). She classifies experiential activities into the following groups: independent learning, personal development, social change, non-traditional learning, prior

learning, work experience, learning by doing and problem-based learning.

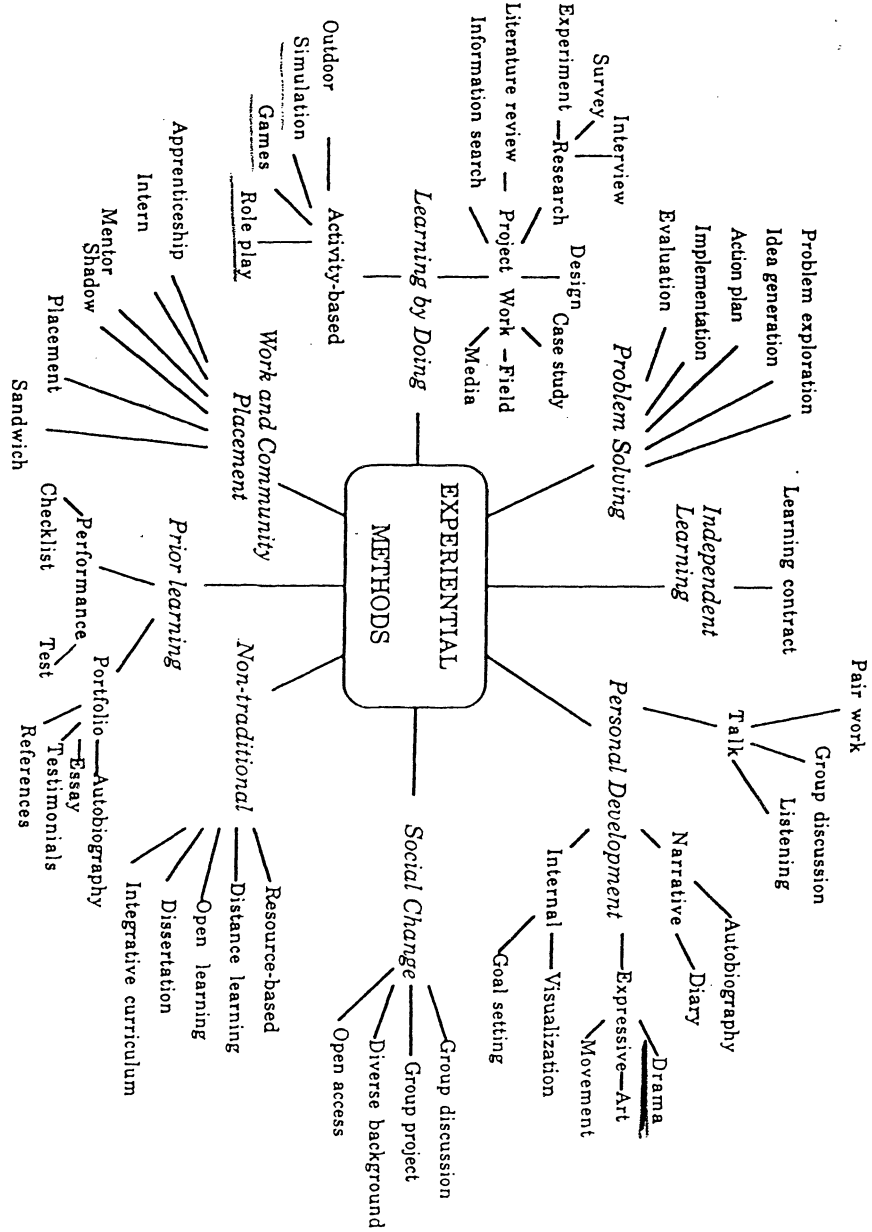


Figure 2.3 Experiential learning methods.

Fig. 2: Experiential Learning Methods (Henry 1996)

When it comes to identifying role-play as an experiential method, Henry places it in the category of 'learning by doing', a category further subdivided into 'activity-based' strategies and then grouped with outdoor activities, simulation and games. There does not appear to be a strong connection between outdoor activities and role-play. It is with simulation and games that role-play is mainly seen to reside.

In my view however, role-play could have straddled most of the other groups mentioned by Henry. For example Boal (1979) has already demonstrated that role-play can be used as a strategy for social change, and its potential as a tool for personal development has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is interesting that role-play has not been positioned in the 'personal development group', given that drama is included in this grouping. Drama is placed within the personal development group as an expressive strategy along with art and movement. This illustrates a recurring separation of role-play from its expressive, artistic roots, and its being aligned with simulation and games. I will argue that this is at the heart of the problems that can emerge in role-play practice.

If there is truth in the proposition that experiential learning provides a shaky theoretical basis for the understanding and practice of role-play, then its alignment with simulation and games within the framework of experiential learning merely adds to this fundamental problem. I discussed earlier in this chapter how simulation and games are difficult to categorise because they encompass such a wide range of different learning activities, including role-play. Now, in order to show why simulations and games provide such a limited context for role-play, I will need to refer briefly to their background and their development as learning strategies.

A brief history of simulation and games

The development of simulation as a learning tool was influenced by the use of flight simulators—beginning during the First World War—and later by the simulators used for space travel. These were designed to replicate reality as closely as possible and provide a place for the inexperienced to gain skills and expertise safely – without the danger of killing themselves or other people. As Taylor and Walford note, “simulation models have demonstrated what could, what should, what possibly might happen” in a real situation (1978, p. 4). So for example, when emergency services engage in a simulation about a bomb attack, they are preparing for a real event. The ‘real situations’ represented by simulations are extremely varied and include architectural planning with community groups, board room battles within business enterprises, and encounters with different cultural groups.

As an educational approach, games have their origins in war games and even board games like chess—which was originally believed to have been used as an exercise for developing battle strategy skills (Taylor and Walford 1978). They, too, are recreating ‘real life’ situations, but in a more symbolic fashion. Games are usually governed by rules and are competitive in nature. I have already pointed out, however, that there is a great deal of overlap between these two approaches. Both simulation and games often have a fun element built into their design, and sometimes use fantasy situations as a way of exploring real issues. For example Jones’s (2002, p. 39) simulation, ‘Planet Zita’, asks the participants to take on the role of the crew of a spaceship in a survival scenario.

In addition, there is an important branch of simulation and gaming that is rooted in mathematics and is interested in probability theory, game theory and other associated techniques. These theories are used to build in chance and random elements for computer generated simulations and games (Taylor and Walford 1978).

Mathematics and scientific thinking have played a large part in shaping the development of elements and processes employed in simulations and games, and have left their mark on the kind of language used. For example, concepts such as 'system properties', 'operational constraints' and 'invariant formalised processes' are used as tools for the analysis of these educational activities, and influence the way simulation and games are perceived and used in practice (Crookall, Oxford and Saunders 1987). The tendency for simulations and games to have a scientific bias can lead to them being designed like a research experiment, and this results in a tendency for them to be excessively structured.

This, as Eden and Fineman (1986) note, can stifle the spontaneous exploration of a role or situation because they demand 'closed', or rule-driven, fixed ways of working rather than 'open' flexible models, which would give participants more freedom and choice. For example, role-cards giving detailed information about the role of a company manager, including information on the way she looks, her personality traits (well preserved mid-forties, with fiery temper and does not suffer fools) and their personal life (married, living in the suburbs with three children and a dog) leaves participants little room for imaginative interpretation.

In the literature on simulation and games in education, role-play's connection with drama and theatre arts tends to be either minimised or

trivialised. There are exceptions, and Van Ments has certainly been a strong proponent for the acknowledgment of role-play as a strategy in its own right, related but separate from simulation and games. Whilst he sees role-play chiefly as an exploration of social roles, and believes role-play should not be confused with acting, he does recognise that the concept of role is an extension of the "theatrical use, meaning an actor's part in a drama" (1983, p. 17). In a more recent article, he shows an increased sensitivity to the relationship between theatre arts and role-play. Whilst still identifying role-play as an exploration of the roles adopted in 'normal life', he also suggests that there are connections between this and acting. He presents elements such as an actor's development of character and use of improvisation as useful touchstones for thinking about role-play work. He suggests that actors "project themselves into the part and play it out the same way as we ourselves play out the self-image which we carry around with us" (1996, p. 128).

There are also other writers, such as Taylor and Walford, who mention how the development of drama and theatre-in-education in the 1950's and 60's was an influential factor in the growth of simulations and games. However, they describe drama as "a more free-wheeling branch of the family of simulation styles" (1978, p. 5). Jones (1989, p.165) argues that the dramatic aspect of role-play should not be taken seriously, through his definition of it as 'play-acting'. He rejects the idea that drama has anything to do with the role-playing that occurs in simulation and games. He sees role-play in this context as being chiefly functional. In other words, participants adopt a role within in a pre-defined social framework so that the simulation can function effectively.

Once role-play is separated from drama and defined in this way, it suffers a loss of identity. It becomes seen merely as minor element of simulation. Crookall, et al. reinforce that this is the case by proposing that it “is useful to consider role-play as a component embedded within a simulation rather than as a totally separate (albeit similar) type of activity” (1987, p. 155). They even suggested that “a role-play is always a simulation” (1987, p. 147). Even Van Ments (1983, p. 15) defines role-play as “one particular type of simulation that focuses attention on the interaction of people with one another”. He states that the roles people play are determined by “the functions performed by different people under different circumstances”.

This rhetoric subsumes role-play into a framework that minimises its dramatic connections, and maximises its pragmatic realism. Consequently, the creative, imaginative, and spontaneous aspects of role-play are stunted. As I noted earlier, it is this emphasis on the *reality* component of role-play in simulations and games, rather than its representational, artificial nature, that leads to problems of participants over-identifying with a role and getting too emotionally involved in the action.

Although the valuing of the emotional content of learning is customarily seen as an important part of the experiential approach, there seems to be an actual fear of the emotions in simulation and games. The examples I analysed earlier in this chapter were mainly concerned with the emotions emerging during these activities. It was these that were seen as problematic and an inappropriate part of the learning event (Jones 1989, 1994, 1997). Van Ments also recognised that:

Perhaps the most difficult thing to handle during the running of a role-play is the emotional involvement of those concerned (1996, p.134).

He suggested that when strong feelings are involved it is better to take 'time out', and in the debriefing avoid focusing too much on the emotions because "simulations are not therapeutic groups" (1996, p. 134).

I shall be arguing that there is a place for dealing with the affective aspects of role-play in adult education, and that this place will be found only if we can achieve a better understanding of the contribution drama and theatre arts have to offer to role-play theory and practice.

Chapter 4.

Why connect drama and theatre arts and role-play in adult education?

Once reconnected to its roots in drama and theatre arts, role-play can draw upon a wide range of literature on the meaning of role and how it operates in practice. This illuminates how (in contrast to what the experience-based learning literature suggests) role-taking and role-play are not mere afterthoughts, subsumable into simulation and games. Nor, for that matter, are they subsumable into any comparable sub-field. Role-play lies at the very heart of drama and theatre arts practice, having its own roots and traditions, leading to its own special modes of application within adult education.

I suggest that the strong connections between role-play in adult education and drama and theatre arts have been overlooked for three chief reasons:

- theatre is often thought to be about entertainment not about education
- drama-in-education is thought to be concerned with children only and not with adults
- role-play is thought to be concerned only with *social* roles, and not with theatre and acting.

I will now examine each of these suppositions in turn in order to question their validity.

Supposition 1: Theatre is about entertainment not education

Even if it is acknowledged that drama, theatre arts and role-play emerged from similar roots, there is a good case to be made that they have quite different forms and functions. Theatre is an art form concerned with public entertainment, whilst role-play is a teaching strategy concerned with learning.

If we examine this assumption looking at theatre first, we can see that theatre is usually characterised as being performance-based, and that its essence “is within a mystery called ‘the present moment’” (Brook 1995, p. 97). Brook is referring here to theatre’s ability to present imaginary scenarios to an audience and make them believe that are viewing an event that is taking place at that moment in time. It is this complex relationship between space,

actors, scenery, sound, lighting, properties, and the audience that gives theatre its peculiar power (Fortier 1997). A team of skilful actors, stage managers, technical support staff and a director are responsible for making a performance credible, so the audience can 'suspend their disbelief' and engage in the illusion put before them. It can be argued, therefore, that theatre is an art form to be appreciated in its own right. Its purpose is to offer an escape from the 'real world', and by doing so delight and give pleasure to its audience, not instruct them.

In 'The Empty Space' (1986), Brook points out that theatre can just be about entertainment—as the popular passion for musicals demonstrates—but if this is all theatre has to offer it can also be seen as a 'deadly' aberration of its true nature. He believes that an elemental part of the function of theatre is to be an "arena where a living confrontation can take place" and that it can potentially transform the way an audience sees the world (1986, p.112).

I shall refer to a personal experience that took place in 2002 to illustrate this proposition.

I had a day free before a conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, so I went to see a few productions at the fringe theatre festival, which happened to be on at that time. One piece of theatre – 'Bright Colours Only' – was a one-woman show. It was a play about death.

On entering the theatre, which is not much bigger than a generously proportioned front lounge, I am greeted by the actress who offers me sandwiches and whisky from a tray she is carrying. I realise I am at an Irish wake. There are members of the audience sitting on sofas on stage

as well as on more conventional tiered seating. A coffin is on stage. It is so close to me that I could touch it.

During the performance the actress takes on various roles. She first greets the audience as if they were attending the wake of her mother and gives some background on the event we are involved in. Then she changes roles and acts as an undertaker. She takes the lid off the coffin in order to explain the mysteries behind coffin etiquette and coolly describes the kinds of finishes that are available for coffins including veneer, lining, and handles. She describes the type of gown that the corpse should be dressed in. There is no body in the coffin at this point.

*Later in the performance the actress spoke **as herself**. She described with humour and pathos, the relationship she had with her mother. Towards the end of the play she has donned the funeral gown displayed for us earlier ("Would you like to feel the satin?").*

She lies in the coffin, which is now upright so she can stand in it, while contemplating her own death. Four pall bearers put the coffin lid back on and lift it onto their shoulders. Side doors open onto the street and the audience follows the coffin and pall bearers out of the theatre and into the street. A hearse picks up the coffin and bears the performers away. We, the audience, are left standing outside in the street.

The question I now need to ask is, 'Was this piece of theatre just a piece of entertainment? Or did I learn something from it as well?'

Learning from theatre

The great eternal question that we ask ourselves is:
"How are we to live?" But great questions remain

completely illusionary and theoretical if there isn't a concrete base for application in the field (Brook 1995, p. 75).

In this statement, Brook argues that theatre provides that 'concrete base' because it has the special ability to present a focused, selective view of human existence "more visible, more vivid than on the outside" (1995, p. 11). By doing so it highlights issues in the everyday world which otherwise would go unnoticed. Theatre presents a space where an audience can concentrate on a microcosm of human interaction, focus on particular issues and learn from the experience. If learning is interpreted in a humanist way as "the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions" (Jarvis 1995, p. 20), rather than in a behaviourist fashion as "a more or less permanent change in behaviour which is the result of experience," (Hilgard & Atkinson in Jarvis 1995), then I believe Brook's argument to be apt and relevant. That is to say, theatre in its broadest sense can and should be seen to be concerned with teaching and learning.

That may seem a strange claim to make if we think of theatre in its many contemporary manifestations and particularly the 'deadly' nature of much of what is on offer. It is important to remember however, that in past times, theatre's role as a medium for social instruction was far less disguised.

Aristotle saw the purpose of tragedy as being to provide 'catharsis' or a purging of the emotions. The audience was encouraged firstly to identify with the main character

(hero/heroine), who was presented as person to be admired for their fine qualities, such as a brave Warrior, or a wise King, and to live vicariously through the characters' actions (Boal 1993). The audience needed to feel empathy for the main character so that they could relate to their fatal flaw—for example, Antigone's stubborn pride—and recognise it as their own:

Pity for the hero, and fear for oneself based on an identification with him, would be the natural emotional outcome of following such a tale. The tragic work would educate us to acquire modesty about our capacity to avoid disaster and at the same time guide us to feel sympathy for those who had met with it (de Botton 2004, p. 159).

As those portrayed in tragedy tend to be the rich and powerful, this means that the audience's sympathy would lie with them and their adversity. Through their engagement in tragedy, the audience was able to purge themselves of unhealthy thoughts or feelings about those in power, that might be detrimental to the social good. They were learning to be good citizens of Athens!

If we examine the Medieval 'mystery plays', we see that their primary role was to teach religion to the illiterate. Even though secular elements were rapidly introduced into the mystery plays, they remained a major teaching tool for the church.

Subsequently, Shakespeare intended his work—especially the history plays—to teach audiences about the political strength of the Elizabethan monarchy, and the forms and pressures of the

age. He brought “the patterns of events in the outside world, the inner events of complex men isolated as individuals, the vast tug of their fears and aspirations, into open conflict” (Brook 1986, p. 40). This challenged audiences to see events in a different way, which is to say his plays sought to *transform their understanding*.

Earlier reference was made to Brook’s ‘rough theatre’ category. This has a strong teaching element, since its stated aim is to educate the community politically. Brecht issues a caution however, by pointing out that theatre should not be concerned with blatant or conspicuous instruction but should be entertaining and enjoyable as well. He claims that “the contrast between learning and amusing oneself is not laid down by divine rule”. Theatre can promote “cheerful, militant learning”, but above all the strength of theatre as a means of education is the way it can provide pleasure in learning:

Theatre remains theatre even when it is instructive theatre, and so far as it is good theatre it will amuse (Brecht 1957, translated by Willett, p. 72 & 73).

Brook agrees with this criticism and says that in rough theatre, alongside any “serious, committed, probing work,” there is an intent “unashamedly to make joy and laughter” (1986, p. 78). Brecht is adamant that theatre should not just please and satisfy its audiences’ habits but must “succeed in *transforming them*” (1944, translated in Willett p. 161). This idea of theatre as a transformative medium has resonances both with Brook’s concept of ‘immediate theatre’ and Jarvis’ definition of learning as “the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills,

attitudes, values, emotions” (1995, p. 20). Audiences are not passive observers of a play. Though the use of various dramatic forms, they are encouraged not just to empathise with what is happening on the stage but also to criticise it. This, if it succeeds, is an unashamedly educational goal.

Boal’s (1993) forum theatre is designed to stimulate radical learning and uses a variety of drama techniques to achieve its learning goals. Forum theatre is presented as a kind of ‘game’. A group of participants will identify a situation of oppression and act it out in front of the rest of the group. The audience or ‘spect-actors’ may then enter the drama and take over from the actors to show how things could have been done differently. Different strategies are tried until the best way is found to combat the oppression. In this example theatre is being used to educate people to take power into their own hands. It may even trigger revolutionary action. Boal emphasises however that in forum theatre it is more important to “stimulate debate” and “get people to question issues in a public forum” than find a good solution (Boal 1992, p. xx). This in itself is clearly an educational goal. Van Vuuren similarly sees forum theatre as an act of learning:

The aim of the forum is not to win, but to learn and to train (1995, p. 12).

Boal has taken ideas of theatre and critical learning one step further by getting the audience actively involved. The audience can no longer remain passive onlookers but should become ‘spect-ators’ who both observe and act. The ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ –including the game of forum theatre–represents

“reflective strategies that enable the development of perspectives that can give rise to significant change” (Van Vuuren 1995, p. 12).

This cycle of action and reflection takes us directly into the experience-based learning literature. It is closely reminiscent of Lewin’s (1951) model of experiential learning. This close similarity reinforces my assertion that there are strong and clear connections between theatre and learning.

Let us return to the anecdote this chapter began with and ask ourselves whether the theatre event I saw in Edinburgh was just entertainment or was it educational?’ And if it was, was it intentionally educational? I believe the answer to both questions is ‘yes’. Certainly the theatre experience kept my attention and amused me, but because of the way the performance was deliberately structured, it also challenged—and was designed to challenge—my views on the issue of death. As such it was an educative experience.

I will now describe some aspects of the Edinburgh theatre performance that I would classify as educational. I was given a role in the drama and as a consequence felt strongly involved in it. This motivated me to take notice and learn. The actress, through the roles she played, provided different perspectives on death—both personal and professional—for me to contemplate. Some of these perspectives caused me discomfort because they challenged my accepted view of the topic. The move from inside the theatre to an outside space gave me a perceptual jolt. It stimulated me to reflect on what I had seen and the meaning behind it.

Was all that part of the conditions of learning? I believe it is self-evident that it was. It encouraged both perceptual and attitudinal change and these are each recognised as significant, if intangible, aspects of learning (Brookfield 1987, 1990, 1995; Mezirow 1983, 1990, 1991, 2000).

It is, perhaps, ironically appropriate that one of the most ephemeral of art forms—in the proper hands—manages to provide a space for some of the more intangible forms of learning. Boal captures something of the capacity of theatre to challenge our perceptions and change our attitudes when he says:

...theatre is the capacity possessed by human beings—and not by animals—to observe themselves in action. Humans are capable of seeing themselves in the act of seeing, of thinking their emotions, of being moved by their thoughts. They can see themselves today and imagine themselves tomorrow (1992, p. xxvi).

It is the way that theatre at its best offers the audience a chance to see things from a new perspective that makes it such a useful medium for learning. Theatre's ability to cause a perceptual shift in its audience resonates with Mezirow's concept of a "disorientating dilemma" (1990, p. 14). This is an event that challenges one's presuppositions and can trigger transformative learning, which Mezirow defined as "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action" (1990, p. 1).

It is hardly controversial to suggest that theatre can be a stimulus for reflection. I argue that it additionally has the potential to initiate transformative learning, which is a matter to be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

To this point, I have argued that throughout its history theatre has been seen as an effective teaching tool. This should not be taken to mean it provides a form of instruction in any formal sense, but rather that it offers the potential for much more subtle—and possibly enduring—forms of learning. These happen through theatre's ability *to make us look at the familiar in a new way*. This shift in perception can lead to attitudinal change and that is at the very heart of transformative learning. If theatre has the potential to stimulate learning, then this provides us with a rationale for using theatre as a tool for the analysis of role-play as a learning strategy, since the latter shares many of theatre's essential characteristics.

Supposition 2: Drama-in-education is concerned with children, not adults

As its name indicates, drama-in-education has always had a strong teaching and learning focus. It was developed as an educational arm of theatre. As I explained in Chapter 1, however, it has not always had the closest of relationships with theatre arts. Nevertheless, there is no doubting the fact that drama-in-education and theatre arts do share a common heritage. The debate underlying Supposition 2 is not whether drama-in-education is concerned with entertainment or learning, but

whether it is can offer useful insights for *adult* learners. This question has to arise because most of the drama-in-education literature refers to child, rather than adult, education.

I will offer an experience from my own career as an illustration that helps clarify the tension existing here.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, on first coming to work in Australia I found myself with a new identity, that of an 'adult educator'. Although I had already been working with adults in education for nearly ten years, I had not identified myself by this particular label. I certainly was not familiar with the adult education literature nor had I heard of experiential learning.

As I came to learn more about both these areas I became perplexed. The concepts I was learning about in the discipline of adult education were already familiar. Certainly the adult education literature laid some sort of 'claim' to these ideas, nevertheless I had already come across them before in drama-in-education literature. That discipline, however, referred almost exclusively to primary and secondary education.

Adult education claims to be particularly interested in valuing the life experience that adult learners bring with them to the learning situation. It acknowledges that adults are not 'empty vessels' to be filled with information, but to some degree are already proficient learners either in formal and/or informal contexts (Rogers 1983; Foley 2000, 2004; Jarvis 1995). Informal learning, which involves the kind of knowledge and understanding accruing from

experiences within the family, the community and the workplace, is particularly valued.

In the Adult Education tradition there is a strong belief that learning should be contextualised, which means locating learners in their socio-cultural milieu so that the learning is relevant to their particular needs (Jarvis 1995). The Adult Education tutor's role is that of a facilitator who helps adults identify their own relevant learning goals and then guides rather than directs them towards these goals. This self-directed-learning is sometimes achieved through the development of a 'learning contract' (Knowles 1975; Anderson, Boud & Sampson 1996) which is "a written agreement negotiated between a learner and a teacher, lecturer or staff adviser that a particular activity will be undertaken to achieve a specific learning goal or goals" (Anderson et al. 1996, p. 2). The ultimate aim is for the adult to become an autonomous, self-directed learner. The power relationship between the adult educator and the adult learner is finely balanced, as Newman noted:

...the teacher and the student meet, the student to learn and the teacher to help that student learn. Together they develop the curriculum. In its purest form the encounter is divorced from any organisation or anyone else's objectives (1993, p. 30).

In an influential book 'The Adult Learner, a neglected species', first published in 1973, Knowles used the term 'andragogy', which he defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (1990, p. 54). He contrasted this with pedagogy, which he defined

as “the art and science of teaching children” (1990, p. 28). To Knowles children were perceived as essentially dependent learners, whereas adults were (at least potentially) autonomous.

Subsequently, however, Knowles acknowledged that the divide between pedagogy and andragogy was not as clear cut as he had previously believed. He recommended educators “have the responsibility to check out which assumptions {of andragogy} are realistic in a given situation” (1990, p. 64). This blurring of what had been previously regarded as a rigid boundary is important for my argument.

It is helpful to outline some of the assumptions on which Knowles bases his concept of andragogy, so that we can then examine their relevance to drama-in-education.

According to Knowles (1990):

- (a) Adults need to have a clear rationale for learning and a need to know how it would benefit “the learner’s performance or the quality of their lives” (p. 58)
- (b) Adults have a self-image that embraces ideas of personal responsibility “for their own decisions and their own lives” (p. 58)
- (c) Adults bring a “greater volume and a different quality of experience” (p. 59) to learning than children
- (d) If adults can see the relevance of what they are doing to their real life situations they will bring a “readiness to know” (p. 60) to the learning event

- (e) Adults' orientation to learning is not subject-centred like a child's school curriculum, but 'life-centred (or task-centred or problem-centred)' (p. 61)
- (f) Adults are more likely to be motivated by internal pressures such as "increased job satisfaction, self esteem, quality of life" (p. 63), than by external factors such as the gold stars and exam results that may motivate students.

Knowles' andragogical assumptions have become widely referred to as a statement of 'adult learning principles', so this is the phrase I will employ from now on. In order to compare these principles with some of the learning principles embodied in drama-in-education, I will give an example of a drama session conducted with a group of children who were under ten years of age. The example is Bolton's (1995) description of a class taken by the 'guru' of drama-in-education, Dorothy Heathcote.

Heathcote was in America at the time of the Watergate scandal. This event brought about the downfall of President Nixon who was exposed as a liar and a cheat.

The topic of Watergate came up when the children were discussing making a national museum to celebrate America's bicentennial year. The children decided on the topic (Watergate) and the context (a museum) and Heathcote proposed the dramatic element, which was that the children take on the role of museum curators running a wax museum.

It had to be a *wax* museum, so that one of the principal tasks would be to devise tableaux illustrating different aspects of the of the Watergate events, aspects revealing both *facts* and *feelings* (Bolton and Heathcote 1995, p. 86).

The initial discussion had alerted Heathcote to the children's restricted viewpoints on the topic, so she employed the waxwork strategy to slow down the action of the drama and allow plenty of time for contemplation.

Heathcote then proposed that the children use themselves as models in the development of the tableaux – “Can we... ‘stand in’ for the models as a way of being absolutely certain what it is we want these models to teach the public?” (1995, p. 86). She then used another dramatic feature to add further complexity to their task by suggesting that they pin papers inscribed with lines of dialogue onto the shoulders of the models (themselves). On the other side of the paper they were to write what the people represented were thinking privately.

The children were also allowed to select a couple of props to flesh out their tableaux. One tableau related to ‘Nixon’s visits to Russia’, and consisted of a model standing beside a globe of the world with one hand on Russia and the other pointing forward. The card on the model’s shoulder read “President Nixon *said*: ‘I did something about the Cold War’ and *thought* ‘They’d better remember *that* when they read the history books.’ ” (1995, pp. 86-87).

Heathcote provided adult resource materials to help students with their research including books, maps, paintings and even a transcript of the judicial proceedings that led to Nixon's expulsion from the presidency. This document was kept in a special library with Heathcote 'in role' as the librarian. Children had to go through an elaborate ritual to reach the book but this made it even more mysterious and desirable to read. Although only 'selective dipping' into the document took place, "as the students gained confidence they browsed unaided" (1995, p. 87). Bolton and Heathcote claimed that after participating in the drama the children had a more discriminating understanding of the Watergate scandal:

What began as a general condemnation of Mr Nixon by the students changed through the making of the tableaux to a more discriminating understanding, because getting the picture to tell the story slowed down the pace of the telling considerably, *allowing time for implications to emerge* (1995, p. 87).

At first glance there may seem few obvious connections between this drama and the adult learning principles identified by Knowles. I believe on closer analysis, however, that interesting resemblances can be found. In the discussion below I refer back to Knowles' assumptions (as listed from 'a' to 'f' on p. 40) to reinforce the connection between adult and child learning in this example. I believe the Heathcote example highlights some striking and undeniable similarities between Knowles' adult learning principles and drama-in-education.

The drama begins with the children identifying *what they are interested in learning*. They play a part in the development of the curriculum by choosing what they *need to know (a)* and what seems relevant to them at that point in time. They take on adult roles and have to respond as museum curators who are responsible for their own decisions. By making them do this Heathcote is reinforcing the importance of self-directedness and encouraging this to become part of their *self-concept (b)*. The children do not have the range of *experience (c)* of adults, but what experience they do have plays an important role in the drama. Children do not come to the drama as 'blank slates'. They bring their already accrued experience and knowledge into the drama, and this is valued as a learning resource.

The children show their *readiness to learn (d)* through their involvement in the drama; it relates to a life event that interests and puzzles them. Also because they have chosen their own topic, the students are pursuing learning that is meaningful to them; they are orientated towards learning that is *relevant to their life experience* and which involves *problem-solving (e)*. The children are set *a task (e)* – to set up a museum and manipulate models so that they make a visual impact on an audience and recount a complex story.

Heathcote describes her drama as usually being about a "Man {sic} in a Mess" (in Bolton & Heathcote 1999)—a suitable description of Nixon in this drama!—which means that it sets up a problem to be solved by the children. Finally the students are *motivated (f)* not by external factors, but by the drama and what they can learn from it.

The main reason Heathcote allows the children so much freedom to decide the what, when and where of the drama is that this helps her overcome one of the biggest problems in teaching: group inertia...If they see their own ideas take shape they are more ready to participate (Wagner 1979, p. 20).

This comparison between this drama activity and adult learning, as exemplified in Knowles' adult learning principles, is illuminating. There are many similarities between the two approaches. One difference however, is that the focus of learning in drama-in-education is on the group—rather than the individual, as it is in adult learning. Whilst ideas of autonomy are stressed in the Heathcote drama-in-education model, they are manifested through group activity. For example, the learning topic explored through the drama is chosen by the group so personal autonomy and growth emerge from the group dynamic.

The role of the facilitator is different in drama-in-education to that proposed by Knowles in his model of adult learning. In the drama-in-education example, the facilitator (Heathcote) strongly influenced what was learned through her choice of the dramatic form that was to be employed and also by the resources she provided. She chose to take on a role as librarian so she could work with the children within the drama rather than staying outside it. The facilitator in drama-in-education uses the children's experience and interests as a starting point, but tends to intervene more overtly in order to shape the learning.

Although there are differences between the facilitator's role in drama-in-education and in adult education, I believe there are important similarities as well.

One similarity is that there is a balance of power between facilitator and student. Another is that the facilitator encourages the learners to become self-sufficient, and provides guidance and resources in order to enable them to achieve that goal. Both adult and drama facilitators discard their 'expert' role. In the case of Heathcote, this 'mantle of the expert' is passed on to her students when she makes them professional museum curators. Both adult educators and drama educators believe it proper to interact with students in a relationship that contains a degree of equality.

Most importantly however, I believe that adult education shares a similar philosophical basis with drama-in-education. Drama-in-education, like adult education, has emerged from a similar kaleidoscope of influences—which include Dewey (1900, 1916, 1934, 1938) as well as movements associated with Humanism and Marxism.

In addition, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, drama-in-education is infused with the romanticism of Rousseau (1762) and ideas of freedom of expression through play. It is rooted in a clear perception of what learning should be, regardless of whether the learner is an adult or child.

This alone I argue, provides a strong rationale for linking drama-in-education to adult education. In addition, however, drama-in-education stimulates learning through enactment. Since role-play

similarly exploits the learning power of enactment in adult education it is entirely appropriate to use drama as a resource for better understanding role-play in the adult education context.

Supposition 3: Role-play is concerned with reproducing social roles, not theatre and acting

We have seen how many of those who use role-play in adult education seem particularly resistant to acknowledging its theatre arts connections. They distrust it because of its links to acting and performance.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how the drama and theatre arts element of role-play has been viewed as unproductive by many educators who use role-play in adult education, but choose to treat it as a sub-set of simulations and gaming. They appear fearful of admitting its links to acting and performance. Role-play, they argue, should not be connected to acting because it derives from role-theory, part of the social sciences, and not from drama as an art form.

I have already argued that this is a restrictive view that fails to fully recognise role-play's imaginative and improvisational nature, the feature which binds role-play closely to theatre.

In order to deal with this last supposition however, it is necessary to investigate the roots of role-play in greater detail. We need to get a better understanding of role-theory and the way role-

playing is popularly perceived in adult education. Then I will demonstrate of some of the shortcomings of this perspective.

Probably one of the most influential books on role-theory is Erving Goffman's, 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' (1984). Goffman uses theatre as a metaphor for understanding the complex dynamics of real-life human social interaction. Heathcote has pointed out that Goffman chose a theatre analogy because "theatre, like sociology, seeks to examine the nature of social life" (in Robinson 1980, p. 8). Goffman proposes the idea that in everyday life "the individual offers his [sic] performance and puts on his show 'for the benefit of other people' " (1984, p. 28). He speaks about us all being involved in acting out different social roles according to the people we are with and the situations we encounter. Thus his ideas have relevance for role behaviour in real life and in scenarios organized by the artist or the educator.

Goffman was not the first social scientist to see connections between the theatre and social interaction. As early as 1927 Evreinoff and Nazarin in 'The Theatre in Life' had suggested that "we are constantly 'playing a part' when we are in society" (in Carlson 1996, p. 36). Also, prior to Goffman, Park linked social performance with playing a role:

It is probably no historic accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role. ... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves (Park in Goffman 1984, p. 30).

The implication is that playing a role is an essential part of our everyday interactions and fundamental to the development of our social identity. The common language meaning of 'role' as a part or character performed by an actor in a drama is translated by role-theory into "a behavioural repertoire characteristic of a person or a position" (Biddle & Thomas 1966, p. 11).

Goffman noted how individuals (and groups) adapt their behaviour and respond differently to people depending on their context. A woman behaves differently in the role of wife from the way she does as mother to a young child. The social context of the home may be the same but the form of language and behaviour the woman uses will change according to the role she is adopting in that situation. If this did not happen, it would be hard for people to identify the social situation they were in and how they should react.

Roles provide information about an individual, which helps "define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he {sic} will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (Goffman 1984, p. 13). Writing about role-play in education, Van Ments agrees. He views role as a form of social shorthand used to help people label patterns of behaviour and make assumptions that certain "appearances and behaviours are characteristic of a particular person or predictable within a given situation" (1983, p. 18).

Van Ments categorises everyday roles into those determined by social position and those by context. For example, the roles I

described above fit into the social position category and often involve reciprocal relationships such as policeman and criminal, mother and child, doctor and patient, solicitor and client. This category of role acts as “a way of expressing the group norms and the social pressures acting on an individual and a group” (1983, p. 18). The focus of this type of role, then, is on a person’s social standing and resultant behaviour.

However, according to Van Ments, if role is defined through *context*, a person’s behaviour is characterised by the group or by the place where the group congregates. For example, at a football match a person’s role becomes that of a football supporter; at church, a member of the congregation. Consequently a person’s role “changes in accordance with his {sic} surroundings” (1983, p. 18). Van Ments also argues that role can be further defined in terms of its function or purpose. So in a hospital roles are differentiated by the function that a person performs, such as nurse, doctor, administrator, physiotherapist or chaplain.

The reciprocal roles that relate to social position also signal different status relationships. A person’s position of power, social standing or ‘status’ is an important feature of role-taking behaviour. Linton claims that “role and status are quite inseparable” (in Biddle & Thomas 1966, p. 7). The 2001 English court case of a GP, Harold Shipman—alias ‘Doctor Death’, who murdered possibly over a hundred of his patients—is an extreme example of the unquestioned power accorded to the role of doctor.

Status is not a static force but something that changes with every new role adopted. As Goffman points out, a professional person might take a 'low key' role in some situations. For example when shopping she might defer to the judgement and tastes of a friend. In her professional sphere however, she may perform in a much more dominant fashion and be concerned about making "an effecting showing" (1984, p. 43). The cliché of the managing director, who is king of his multi-national company but henpecked by his wife at home, reinforces the idea that role-behaviour and status are not only integral to each other but fluid. They change from situation to situation and from relationship to relationship.

Role-theory clearly provides an interesting basis for thinking about role-play in adult education. It helps us appreciate some particular learning possibilities that arise whenever role-play is used in teaching. Social interactions, including power relationships, can be observed in a dynamic fashion and students in a role-play can reflect and discuss their significance.

This explains why people employing role-play within the structured environment of simulations and games find it an attractive option. They focus on the behavioural nature of role and stress the way it can show how people function in complex social situations (Jones 1989; Van Ments 1983).

The role-theory connection does not, however, adequately account for the way so many simulation and games practitioners and theorists emphasise the differences between social performance and theatre. They stress the difference rather than

building on the similarities that exist between them. I will argue that there are two key reasons for this anomaly. First, it flows from a limited interpretation of Goffman's role-theory. Secondly, it involves a neglect of Moreno, the originator of role-play.

Goffman and role-theory

At first sight it appears that Goffman's key interest is in connecting the elements of theatrical performance with social interaction. This is reinforced by his claim in the preface of 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' (1984) that "the perspective used in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical". He even uses theatrical terms such as "dramatic realisation", "performance" and "the setting" (1984, pp. 32 & 40) for the setting that provides the background for different social interactions.

However, he also notes the 'inadequacies' of his theatre analogy. The theatre's presentation of make-believe and the well-rehearsed nature of performance differ from 'real' social experience. Most importantly the audience factor in theatre is different from that which exists in 'real life'. An audience is an essential element of theatre, but is not present in the same form in social situations. Instead, in real life the part an individual plays "is tailored to the parts played by the others present, and yet these others also constitute an audience" (Goffman 1984, preface). When people adopt social roles they are performer and audience at the same time.

It appears that Goffman's ideas on the differences between a performance in the theatre and social role-taking may have served to distort popular viewpoints of how role-play should be perceived in simulation and games. For example, Van Ments discusses the "unfortunate confusion between role-play and acting" (1983, p. 19). The main difference he sees is that actors are interpreting a dramatist's ideas for the benefit of an audience, whilst those involved in role-play are encountering a problem "under an unfamiliar set of constraints" so they can develop their own ideas and improve their personal understanding. The focus is on personal education rather than audience satisfaction.

Thus the 'acting out' in role-playing is, for all practical purposes, no greater than that which is done by the majority of people from time to time in the course of their everyday lives (Van Ments 1983, p. 20).

In this statement Van Ments effectively severs the connection between role-play and theatre arts. Paradoxically, Goffman, in spite of pointing out some of the differences between these two areas, was more interested in promoting the synergies between them.

For example, in 'Frame Analysis' (1975), Goffman presents a model (Fig. 3) entitled 'The Purity of Social Occasions'.

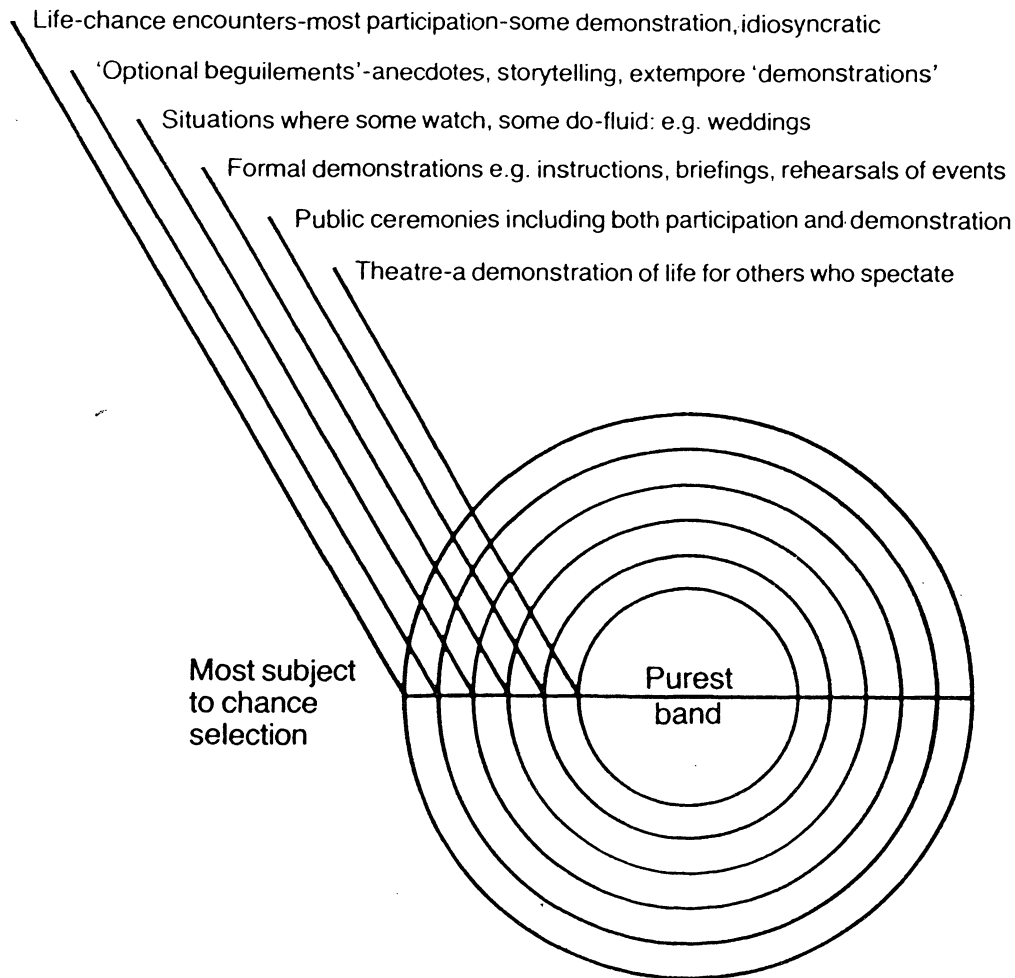


Fig. 3: Goffman's *Purity of Social Occasions* (Heathcote 1984)

In this, theatre is shown to be a part of a circular, banded continuum where social interactions are categorised according to how likely they are to be 'subject to chance selection' or 'pure' — that is, formalised and pre-ordained. So for example, a chance meeting with a friend in the street would reside in the circle's outer band. Both people in this private situation would be active participants in the interaction, and what happened during this time would be subject to chance. In the central circle is theatre, a public place where people watch rather than participate, and what happens is scripted and formalised to the degree that there

is little left to chance. A performance of a play is repeated night after night until its run is finished. Its 'purity' resides in the way it presents a formalised version of social interaction. Heathcote further explains the significance of this model:

The road from existing in your life to demonstrating how life is lived can be thought of as a continuum, thus:

'I live.....I show how life is lived.'

Between these two poles there are many different types of social situations in which we have to find our way (1980 in Robinson, p. 8).

If theatre is a formalised presentation of social interaction, then we need to ask where role-play might fit into Goffman's continuum? It is not the same as a chance life encounter so does not fit into the outer band of the continuum, nor is it theatre in the 'pure' sense, as it is not scripted and performed in a formalised setting. It is somewhere in between these two. Role-play does involve the enactment of social encounters, but the context of the encounter, the people involved, the space and the time are designated. The spontaneous nature of role-play however, means that what happens within the encounter is not pre-ordained and is open to chance. Role-play fits most comfortably into the middle band of formal/informal situations where some watch and some do, interchangeably, in a fluid fashion. It is connected to theatre but relates most closely to its informal, unscripted form, known as improvisation.

Heathcote's analysis of Goffman's model demonstrates how Goffman saw the roles adopted in a theatre and in everyday social interactions not as oppositional forces but part of a continuum. The degree of formality of a situation separates one from the other but ultimately they have an intrinsic connection.

Moreno and psychodrama

The idea that role-play is linked to improvisational theatre gains more credibility when we realise that it was developed by Jacob Moreno who had a background in improvisatory theatre. It is important therefore to return to Moreno, the person who first developed role-play as a therapeutic strategy, to see how he portrays role-play and how he views its relationship to theatre.

Blatner describes Moreno as a psychiatrist who was dedicated to social concerns. He claims that Moreno's writing and work have contributed to many different fields of study including psychotherapy, group dynamics, theories on the nature of children's learning, drama in education, experiential learning and simulations. Interestingly, in this context simulations are seen as "an extension of the basic ideas about role-playing" rather than the other way round (Blatner 1997, p. 146).

Moreno is best known for his development of psychodrama. This is a technique that "involves the staging of a problem in life as if it were a play" (Blatner 1997, p. 1). Role-playing is an integral part of this process. In some cases role-playing has been seen as an equivalent to psychodrama (Kipper 1986).

Both Goffman (1984) and Moreno (1923) used theatre as a basis for the development of their theories. However, whilst Goffman saw theatre as a metaphor for social interaction, Moreno was interested in using theatre techniques therapeutically. Moreno was fascinated by theatre but, like Brook, felt that it had become degraded and lacked vitality. He wanted to see more impromptu acting, and even set up an improvisational group to test out his ideas in practice. It was his experience in theatre that led to the development of psychodrama, an approach that mixes theatre with therapy.

Blatner claims that psychodrama can be understood most simply “in terms of the interaction of four basic ideas: creativity, spontaneity, playfulness, and drama” (1997, p. 148). Moreno believed people’s problems could be solved if their ability to be creative was increased. Creativity does not emerge from just thinking about a problem but by people getting actively involved, communicating and experimenting with different ideas. Moreno saw improvisation as means to foster spontaneity, which in turn could lead to greater creativity:

Moreno found that *drama*, that is, the enactment of problematic situations...offered a particularly rich vehicle for exploring the attitudinal and emotional roots of these problems and for finding more constructive alternatives (Blatner 1997, p. 149)

Moreno, therefore, accepted that acting, in some form, is part of the role-play process. The terminology he uses in psychodrama recognises this relationship. Terms like ‘act hunger’ (which relates

to the need for people to express 'feelings and ideas in action'), and 'protagonist', 'director', 'stage', 'audience', all emphasise the strong links he saw between theatre and his approach to therapy (Blatner 1997, p. xiv).

Moreno also embraced the concept of audience. As Brook noted, this is *the* crucial element of theatre. A person walking across an empty space is not theatrically significant until "someone else is watching him [sic]" (Brook 1986, p. 11). Moreno saw the audience, which consisted of peers and the director (the psychodrama facilitator), as a vital component of psychodrama—as they act as 'witnessing' agents. By watching the psychodrama, the audience increases the client's own witnessing function. The audience being witness helps the client to see herself more clearly as a person. Moreno's contribution to role theory was the insight that "people not only play many roles, but are also capable of bringing a degree of self-reflection to the process" (Blatner 1997, p. 149).

Moreno conceived the focus of role-play within psychodrama as being even more closely linked to theatre practice than did Goffman, in his view of social role performance. Moreno believed that role-play should be an improvisational strategy used to stimulate creativity. That is a position that directly challenges the way role-play has been represented in simulation and games.

It is my view that the popular reinterpretation of role-play merely as a strategy for reproducing social roles neglects role-play's origins as a tool for creative thinking, and its psychological and theatrical heritage. This limitation is a substantial loss for adult education.

Moreno highlights the essential difference between these two positions, a difference which I believe is far from trivial:

Role-playing is an act, a spontaneous playing; role-taking is a finished product, a role conserve (Moreno in Biddle & Thomas 1966, p. 7).

I view role-play as the spontaneous, active exploration of role. It is not just about reproducing social roles but playing creatively with them, even subverting them. It is this spontaneous and creative nature of role-play that so closely links it to theatre and especially to improvisation, which is an unscripted, spontaneous form of theatre. To represent role-play merely as an enactment of 'behavioural repertoires' is to reduce its imaginative potential and deny its true location, which is at least as much in the field of theatre art as it is in the social sciences.

I have argued that role-play is not just a strategy designed to reproduce the social roles people adopt in everyday life. By virtue of its strong links to theatre, especially improvised performance, role-play has a naturally and inherently spontaneous, creative character.

It has to be conceded that role-play, as I envisage it, does not involve the kind of professional acting skills that are identified with theatre. I emphatically believe, however, that role-play does require participants to be aware that they are performing *to an audience of some kind*. Whether this audience consists of participants and the facilitator or, as Moreno suggests, of the

participants themselves as self-monitors is a question to be debated in the next chapter.

Chapter 5.

The art of role-play

Role-play as a concept and a practice is recognised in the literatures of both adult education and theatre arts. However, these two literatures do not overlap, nor is there any significant conversation between the two. Once role-play's dramatic roots are recognised it is possible to refer to the extensive literature in the field of theatre arts to see what it has to offer role-play in adult education. By studying role-play through the lens of theatre arts, rather than that of the social sciences, I believe we can gain an understanding of the dramatic character of role-play, and this can provide fresh insights into how role-play might be employed productively as a learning strategy for adults.

Most importantly, theatre arts may provide answers to certain problems that occur in role-play practice that the social sciences have not been able to answer adequately. These problems relate to participants' engagement in and disengagement from a role-play

situation and how to deal with the emotions that can be generated through role-play. I will briefly recapitulate the nature of these problems as they are linked to the key research questions identified in Chapter 1.

When participants get so involved in a role-play that they are not able to separate fiction from 'real life', this can stimulate a strong emotional response. The expression of strong emotions is perceived as damaging for participants and for the facilitator who has responsibility for managing the learning environment (Van Ments 1992; Jones 1994). The opposite problem arises when facilitators have to deal with people who are reluctant to engage in role-play because they regard it as childish, involving 'make-believe', and therefore not representing the 'real world' closely enough.

In this chapter, I will examine theatre arts literature to see if it can better illuminate the nature of role-play and enlarge our comprehension of its potential as a learning strategy. I will consider the significance of shifting role-play into the domain of theatre arts rather than the social sciences, and explore the ramifications of this move for practitioners in adult education—particularly for how they might perceive it differently and use it more effectively. To do this I need to start by exploring what constitutes the art element of theatre arts and consider its significance to role-play in adult education.

What is art?

Theatre is an art form not a science. This is significant in terms of how role-play should be viewed. Role-play in adult education gains

substantially when it recognises its links to theatre arts. In its present association with the social sciences, where it is subsumed under simulation, games and role-theory, it taps into only a fragment of its potential as a learning strategy.

Before describing the unique properties of theatre arts in particular, it is important to identify some of the characteristics of art form in general.

A discussion of art necessarily involves some reference to the philosophy of art or aesthetics. This is a complex and wide ranging area, and as Cooper notes, "there is no single 'grand narrative' of aesthetics, no continuous story to be told from the beginnings of philosophy to the present" (1997, p. 9). I will narrow my focus, therefore, on to what aesthetic theory has to offer in terms of understanding the particular qualities inherent in theatre as an art form.

The term 'aesthetic' derives from the Greek word *aisthetika* which means "things perceptible through the senses"; for Abbs it denotes "a kind of bodily knowledge, an *apprehension of patterns through the power of sensibility*, especially as it is formally expressed and developed through the arts" (1989, p. 172).

It was first employed in the middle of the eighteenth century and became associated with the study of sensory knowledge, taste and beauty. However, aesthetic issues of this nature have been studied in some form or other since classical times (Cooper 1997). Nicholson points out that "aesthetics is more than an arid branch of philosophical discourse; it is an attempt to explain how and why art matters, to find words to describe the special powers with which the arts can illuminate, move and excite" (1999, p. 81).

Therefore aesthetics is not just concerned with the study of what constitutes art, but also the way art engages both feeling and reason to help people “*make sense of the sensuous*” (Abbs 1987, p. 61). I will consider both the particular qualities of theatre as an art form and the way people respond to a work of art. The two are interrelated because it is the manipulation of form that leads to aesthetic consciousness.

Art can be defined as “the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling” (Langer 1979, p. 40). Abbs believes that art “embodies the invisible logic of the life of feeling and sentience and, in so doing, brings it to conception and consciousness” (1994, p. 224). In other words, art makes the intangible (feelings, sensibility) knowable (conscious) through its creation of ‘significant form’. Whereas Langer argues that the key problem for aesthetics is, “What is ‘significance’ in art? What, in other words, is meant by ‘Significant Form’?” (1979, p. 23). Abbs, on the other hand, is more interested in the impact the aesthetic can have on education.

Both these questions are of interest to me. I want to understand the significant form of theatre more clearly so I can understand how it functions within role-play, but I also want to know how form can be manipulated for educational purposes.

Both Abbs and Langer identify feeling as being at the centre of the arts experience, but recognise that art also has the special ability to “objectify feeling so we can contemplate and understand it” (Langer 1958, p. 5). This is achieved by the ‘lure’ of the art work which, through its particular form, commands a special attention from its audience. At the same time, one of the characteristics of art is its ability to detach itself from the mundane conditions of everyday existence and create an

immediate impression “of ‘otherness’ from reality” (Langer 1979, p. 45). While the audience responds emotionally and engages with the work of art, they nevertheless see it as separate from reality, hence they are able to feel with conscious detachment.

The aesthetic issues of engagement and detachment and emotional responding relate directly to the problems I have identified in role-play practice. Discussions of role-play as an experience-based education strategy tend to concentrate on it as a means of promoting the affective aspects of learning (Boud et al. 1993). However, they provide us with little information on how to facilitate and manage this emotional learning. Aesthetics, with its concern with experiences that ‘illuminate’, move and excite us, has the potential to show us how to effectively manage the emotional learning in role-play.

I will consider the main characteristics of theatre as an art form, by drawing from Langer’s (1979) analysis. Then I will examine the nature of aesthetic engagement and the relationship between artistic form and aesthetic response. Finally, I will discuss how an understanding of the particular characteristics of theatre and the way they promote aesthetic engagement might be of benefit to role-play in adult education.

The art of theatre

What are the particular characteristics of theatre that determine its ‘significant form’ and position it within the community of the arts? We must first acknowledge the viewpoint that theatre lacks the status of “a special mode of a great single art”, and which denigrates it as a bastardised art form (Langer 1979, p. 321). This argument claims that

theatre uses so many of the other 'pure' art forms such as music, dance, painting and literature that it lacks its own significant form, and it is merely a botched amalgam of different elements of the other arts.

Langer attacks this argument by pinpointing what she sees as the significant form of theatre. Firstly, she stresses that drama is aligned to poetry because:

Its substance is an image of human life—ends, means, gains and losses, fulfillment and decline and death. It is the fabric of illusionary experience, and that is the essential product of poesis (1979, p. 306).

Theatre differs from literature, just as painting does from sculpture, because it "makes its own basic abstraction, which gives it a way of its own in making the semblance of history" (Langer 1979, p. 306). Theatre's basic abstraction is three dimensional, embodied and dynamic.

Not only does this form of representation set theatre apart from other art forms, but also its sense of time is different. Rather than showing 'finished realities', theatre has the ability to present immediately how past actions create future consequences. As Langer points out:

It has been said repeatedly that the theatre creates a perpetual present moment; but it is only a present filled with its own future that is really dramatic. A sheer immediacy, an imperishable direct experience without the ominous forward movement of consequential action, would not be so. As literature creates a virtual past, drama creates a virtual

future. The literary mode is the mode of Memory; the dramatic is the mode of Destiny (1979, p. 307).

It is this element of dramatic action propelling events towards the future that gives drama its imaginative power, because "expectation even more obviously than memory, is a product of the imagination" (Langer 1979, p.308). The intersecting of present and future time in dramatic action creates its own imaginative form that is a combination of memory and prophesy: 'immediacy' or 'now'.

This can be illustrated by the example from Shakespeare's play 'King Lear'. The audience is able to view the past as if it was happening at that present moment in time. They see what Lear is unable to see: how his lack of judgement in dealing with his daughters and the division of his realm will bring about his downfall. By being party to scenes that Lear has no knowledge of, the audience has a unique insight into the motivations of the other characters in the play. When Lear's elder daughters, Regan and Goneril, plot against their father behind his back and show how they despise him, this insight granted to the audience gives future scenes between father and daughters added dramatic impact. This knowledge allows the audience to speculate on future events in a way that is impossible for Lear's character.

In actual life we suffer the same limitations as Lear. We are usually only aware of the impending impact our past actions have on future events when we are forced by circumstances to reflect upon them. As Mezirow (1991) points out, this tends to happen after some crisis in our lives forces us to stop and reassess. That might happen to us, for example, when drinking and driving causes an accident or when a when a long-term partner suddenly leaves. Apart from these crises, for the rest of the

time we are not normally conscious of the future as a total experience made up of and substantially determined or shaped by our past and present acts.

This, however, is the special power of drama. It has a sense of destiny. In the theatre the audience knows that every aspect of the action they are observing will lead to a particular destined future. Bolton and Heathcote believe that "it is deeply embedded in our culture that when we watch a dramatic presentation we look for 'what is going to happen next'" (1999, p. 44). Therefore every word that is said, every gesture portrayed, every action that happens, has a special significance. This creates dramatic tension and "the peculiar intensity known as 'dramatic quality'" (Langer 1979, p. 308). It is the intensity that Brook (1986) was referring to when he defined theatre in its most basic form as a man walking across an empty stage. Obviously the man walking across a space is not in itself inherently theatrical. It is the observers' focusing on this act and their expectation that the walking *will have future significance* that makes it theatrical.

Macan (1933) argues that the tension and suspense in theatre is also promoted through the principle of illusion. He defines illusion as "a form in suspense" (in Langer 1979). In a play the form unfolds as the action takes place and is not complete until the play has ended. It is this suspension of form, "the incompleteness of a known completion," that provides a sense of dramatic tension (in Langer 1979, p. 309). It is essential to dramatic form itself. As Dewey noted, "a world that is finished, ended, would have no traits of suspense and crisis, and would offer no opportunity for resolution" (1980, p.17). The type of theatrical form chosen is not important in conveying this. What matters is a sense of the drama moving towards the fulfillment of form.

The illusion of theatre is so powerful that it can sustain breaks. It is usual for a play to have an interval, and during this the drama stops. The audience is encouraged to leave the theatre space. They talk and take refreshment but what is significant is that they have no trouble rejoining the play after the interval is over. The form of theatre leaves the audience in suspense but also promises fulfillment.

So the significant form of theatre is an unfulfilled promise that is realised at the end of a play. Langer summarises this particular power of theatre as an art form and, in so doing, demolishes the 'bastard art' criticism:

It is a human destiny that unfolds before us, its unity is apparent from the opening words or even silent action, because on stage we see acts in their entirety, as we do not see them in the real world except in retrospect, that is by constructive reflection. In theatre they occur in simplified and completed form, with visible motives, directions and ends (1979, p. 310).

Theatre does not randomly present an audience with "acts in their entirety". It selects only what is significant in terms of those events. It is hard to distinguish what is significant in our everyday lives. We can rarely, if ever, disentangle the trivial from the particular because we are surrounded by a mass of different experiences. In theatre however, we do not have to find what is significant. The selection has been made. Whatever is there is significant, and is not too much to be surveyed *in toto*. This explains why 'real life' events are rarely dramatic, whereas those presented in the theatre are so. Theatre presents life in this heightened form and encourages the audience to view actions that

occur in a play differently from the way they view actions experienced in everyday mundane existence.

This is what makes theatre significant and explains why it demands a special kind of concentration from its audience. Theatre form is designed to engage the audience in the action presented before them and to get them to pay attention to what is happening on stage. Focused concentration is thus a key element of the aesthetic experience.

There is more to be said, however, about the ways in which theatre form provokes an aesthetic response from its audience.

The 'dramatic quality' of theatre, the suspense of illusion and the playwright's selection of significant material from life, compress some of the features of theatre form that engage an audience and give a performance its excitement and tension. However, for theatre to operate successfully as an aesthetic form, it is necessary for its audience to sustain a certain sense of detachment throughout a performance.

Bullough (1912) labels this phenomenon, 'psychical distance'. He describes what he understands by this term:

Distance...is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends...But it does not mean that the relation between the self and the object is broken to the extent of becoming 'impersonal'...On the contrary, it describes a *personal* relation, often highly emotionally coloured, but of a *peculiar character*. Its peculiarity lies in that the personal

character of the relation has to have been, so to speak, filtered (in Langer 1979, p. 319).

For States (1985) this psychological distance is created by the rarefied physical space of the stage and the significance it gives to any objects or people who are placed within its boundaries. He calls this area 'intentional space', because everything that is put in it has a special importance and becomes the focus of the audience's attention. This, States believes, is what brings about a perceptual change in the audience. It explains how consciousness 'shifts into another gear' – the displayed object or person is presented as "a signifying, exemplary image" (in Carlson 1996, p. 40).

Langer (1979) notes that because art deals entirely in illusions that have no practical, concrete use, they are readily distanced as symbolic forms. A symbol embodies an idea and presents it for our contemplation. Even though theatre can readily represent 'real life', it is its symbolic nature that is of prime importance. Meaning is not embedded in the practical and concrete nature of enactment, but resides at what Witkin (1974) calls the level of 'symbolic abstraction'. This is a synthesis of all a person has felt about a particular concept. Bolton, like States, believes that it is the *interaction* between the concrete and the abstract in drama that produces significant meaning. The example he provides is from child drama but his focus is on the nature of theatre art:

If the child creating Robin Hood is working at an artistic level, the practical starting point of handling a sword gradually changes through a process of symbolisation so that the sword...takes on other more universal meanings and yet

the concrete object and action continue to anchor those meanings in actuality (1986, p. 141).

The child in its imagination becomes not only Robin Hood the armed outlaw, but a symbol of good overcoming evil. It is, Bolton argues, the potent mix of the real and the abstract that gives theatre its power as an art form.

Langer believes that it is not theatre's role to delude an audience into thinking it is real by presenting over-naturalistic sets or encouraging audience participation. This, she argues, degrades the symbolic qualities of theatre and destroys the psychological distance between the action on stage and the audience. To do this is "to deny that drama is art" (1979, p. 319).

With this analysis as background, we can begin to appreciate how an understanding of the special features of theatre as an art form may provide a useful framework for understanding the nature of role-play and how it functions as a learning approach. I will examine how an appreciation of the aesthetic can provide answers to the problems of engagement and disengagement in role-play in adult education.

Role-play and theatre art

Role-play and theatre are connected because they share the same significant form. Role-play, like theatre in general, operates in a three dimensional, dynamic, embodied space. It has the ability to reorder the dynamics of time, synthesising past and future into an active present. It

is also concerned with illusion, and it presents an incomplete form that only reaches completion when the scenario ends.

Role-play, due to its improvisational nature, is less likely to be as carefully constructed as a scripted theatre play. It will also have the appearance of being 'less finite' and more open-ended. However, theatre form can still be used in role-play to provide new insights into the problems of engagement and disengagement.

Langer identified the aspects of form that entice an audience into the drama. These were: firstly, the excitement of being able to see the past and future in action in the immediate present—something we can rarely if ever do in 'real life'. Secondly, the pleasure of completing the incomplete form of the play as it draws to its conclusion. Thirdly, a play dispenses with the uninteresting 'humdrum' parts of life in favour of the dramatic, and then places this action on a stage for our focused contemplation. This has the effect of drawing the audience into the drama. All these aspects of theatre form are concerned with engagement and involvement.

The idea of psychic distance described earlier relates to the way theatre as an art form can promote an 'engaging disengagement' from a dramatic situation. The audience is involved in the play and may respond to it emotionally, but because of the strong symbolic nature of drama—its staged artificiality—they are also able to critically understand what is happening from a distance. Best believes that this occurs because feeling and reason combine, allowing the audience to respond in a detached, critical manner, but at the same time have the emotional capacity to involve themselves in a "personally meaningful

way" (1985, p. 194). In other words the psychic distance that theatre creates provides a means for comprehending feeling.

I believe that if adult educators can recognise the way theatre form operates and how it can stimulate an aesthetic response, they may also understand how role-play has the power to engage or detach. Role-play shares enough of the salient characteristics of theatre that its 'significant form' can be used to deal with the problems that arise when participants in a role-play get too emotionally involved in the action or, alternatively, are not willing to get involved at all. The elements of theatre form that engage and detach participants from the dramatic experience can (if we recognise and understand them) be manipulated to help role-play participants find a balance between being emotionally involved yet critically distant.

Nonetheless, one vital part of the theatre dynamic certainly appears to be missing in a role-play – that is, the audience. In theatre the audience is seen as an integral part of the aesthetic experience. As Abbs bluntly puts it, "No audience – no aesthetic" (1987, p. 58). On the other hand, in role-play it is usual for everyone to participate in the action, and performing to an audience is actively discouraged.

Van Ments reinforces the position that role-plays should be conducted without an audience in small 'buzz groups' operating simultaneously in different parts of the room. This way "the role-players are no longer exposed to an audience and can feel far more secure" (1992, p. 84). A single observer may be used for each group, but the main focus is on the experience of the participants rather than the experience of an audience. Therefore, it is those participating in the role-play ('the

actors') who have to confront the problems of engagement and disengagement.

A further distinction is that role-play, if it is being true to its improvisational nature, will not be scripted. But in theatre it is the playwright through script who provides part of the dramatic form of a play. The playwright's selection of dramatic events is an integral part of the fulfillment of dramatic form and the promotion of the aesthetic. Unscripted role-play appears to lack that potential.

I have argued that there are strong similarities between the significant form of theatre and that of role-play, but also pointed out that these are incomplete. Whilst role-play shares many of the characteristics of theatre, it does not, on this present analysis, display all the necessary elements that would allow it to qualify as an art form. Consequently, it could be argued that aesthetic theory is not relevant to role-play in adult education. On that argument, role-play has a severely limited dramatic form, and this deficiency may mean that it cannot stimulate an aesthetic response from its participants. This, if it were true, would be disappointing, as it suggests that theatre arts cannot provide a new way forward for role-play. The aesthetic approach appeared promising in terms of providing answers to the problems of engagement and disengagement in role-play in adult education, but if it is ruled out as inapplicable where do we turn to for help?

We could adopt the view that role-play has limited links to theatre because of too inflexible an analysis of the nature of theatre art. There are considerably more flexible and inclusive views of what constitutes art and the aesthetic, as well as different definitions of theatre and audience.

Dewey (1934) in 'Art and Experience' presents an alternative aesthetic which links art to everyday experience. He rejects the artificial division of audience from participant in the creation of works of art and views art instead as an important means of communal expression. Bolton, writing from a drama-in-education perspective, also argues against the audience and participant divide. He believes it is possible for a person to both create *and* spectate, to be actor *and* audience within a drama. Bolton calls this process "self-spectatorship" (2000, p. 24). It presents a different concept of what an audience might be and how an aesthetic experience can be generated through drama. For Bolton this means that drama-in-education has the potential to be an art form even though it might focus on child participation rather than creating theatre for an audience.

I will now investigate the validity of Dewey and Bolton's views to see if role-play does have the potential to be regarded as an art form even though it is not scripted and lacks a traditional audience.

Art and everyday experience

Dewey (1934) questioned why there was a divide between the producers and consumers of art, between the artist and the viewer, between the actor and the audience. Dewey believed it was a mistake to separate art from everyday experience. He claimed that:

When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which aesthetic theory deals (1980, p. 5).

Dewey argues, in other words, that art should not be separated from the people who create it. He uses the Parthenon in Greece as an example. Whilst 'by common consent' this building is considered a great work of art, its real artistic significance lies in the people who "built it not as a work of art but as a civic commemoration" (1980, p. 4), and used and experienced it as such a building. If the Parthenon provided a place for civic interaction, then drama provided a social space for the reenactment of the legends and history of a group. It is only when the social significance of art is highlighted that it ceases to be something rarefied and elite and begins to have some relevance to ordinary people.

Dewey believed that art originally arose from and was part of community activity, and he went on to argue that art should be reintegrated into everyday existence. He took the example of aboriginal artifacts such as woven baskets and carved spears—objects that "were enhancements of the processes of everyday life" (1997, p. 6), and which are now on display in art galleries and museums as works of art. They have become detached from their real use and aesthetic heritage. Dewey claimed that just as there is no necessary correlation between the aboriginal artifacts and the art gallery, drama need not have a 'peculiar connection' with theatre. If we adopt Dewey's position, this allows drama to be seen as an inclusive, social, participatory activity that is community-based. Theatre becomes an activity that is not restricted to particular buildings.

Dewey argued that the separation of art from community and its objectification into collectable items is influenced by the growth of capitalism. He noted that:

Generally speaking the typical collector is the typical capitalist. For evidence of good standing in the realm of higher culture, he amasses paintings, statuary, and artistic *bijoux*, as his stocks and bonds certify to his standing in the economic world (1980, p. 8)

Art, Dewey argued, has been severed from the people for political reasons. The art galleries, theatres and museums—the bastions of good taste—are designed to show that the community is not totally absorbed in material wealth and that the rich are capable of generosity through patronage. These buildings, their segregation from common life, and the superior cultural status they are afforded, disempowers and degrades the “native spontaneous culture” of ordinary people (1980, p. 9).

For Dewey, the capitalist appropriation of art creates a similar divide to the one that exists between producer and consumer. This has created a “chasm between ordinary and aesthetic experience” (1980, p. 10). Ordinary people, by becoming passive consumers of art, have actually diminished their potential to experience the aesthetic.

Dewey is interested in reinstating people as both active producers and appreciators of art rather than just being consumers of an art provided for them. For him, the aesthetic is “everything that intensifies the sense of immediate living” (1980, p. 6). Art, therefore, exists in everyday experience. In its raw state it can be found in the pleasure and attention people demonstrate when watching sport or when they focus their attention on wood burning and smouldering in the hearth as they poke it into life.

Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience (Dewey 1980, p. 19).

Dewey's ideas appear to be based on the Darwinian concept that the core of people's existence is their struggle with the environment. Their interaction with the environment is constantly in flux so there is always the threat of disorder in life. An appreciation of the aesthetic occurs whenever harmony is achieved after a loss of integration. This is because "the moment of passage from disturbance into harmony is that of intensest life" (1980, p. 17).

Emotion is seen by Dewey as a signal of tension and disharmony, but it can also be used as a trigger for initiating further interaction with the environment—which in turn leads to the possibility of re-attaining equilibrium:

Form is arrived at whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached (1980, p. 14).

Disorder and tension stimulate an interest in objects as a means of creating harmony. The artist's desire for equilibrium is projected onto the object being created and it becomes a medium for the expression of her art. So for an artist, tension can be productive and raises the possibility of "bringing to life consciousness an experience that is unified and total". Aesthetic experience is the fulfillment of a desire withheld. Like desire it is imbued with emotion, but unlike desire it is

tempered by thought, though the thought "is more immediately embodied in the object" (Dewey 1980, p. 15).

Once desire has been satisfied and harmony is achieved then, Dewey believes, an appreciation of the aesthetic can begin. Aesthetic consciousness requires a person to be acutely present in the moment. Absorption with the past or anticipation of the future is stilled. Dewey describes this unique experience:

Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is (1980, p. 18).

It is not just the mind that is wholly present but the body too. Dewey rejects the artificial separation of the mental and the physical and sees the aesthetic experience as a holistic one where mind, body and emotions are in tune.

Dewey's (1934) view of art and the aesthetic is of particular interest to educators because it is rooted in everyday experience. He demonstrates that theatre as an art form does not have to be a scripted play that takes place in a theatre in front of an audience. It can be a community experience, where the struggles of human existence are portrayed in a form that allows for the resolution of tension and promotion of harmony. The portrayal of a dramatic event can create equilibrium in a way that is difficult to achieve in 'real life', because it has the power to select and pattern random life events and make them meaningful. It is drama's ability to find harmony in disorder that creates its potential aesthetic.

Because Dewey perceives art as part of everyday experience, participants are not positioned as passive observers but producers and consumers of art. In terms of theatre, this means people can be actors and audience in their own dramas, and create an art that is integral to their sense of identity and place in the wider community. The Deweyan emphasis on drama as a form of community expression has links to Brook's later concept of rough theatre. This alongside Dewey's rejection of bourgeois art adds an unexpected political dimension to the aesthetic.

It was pointed out in Chapter 3 that role-play is a group orientated teaching strategy using experience as its basis for learning. In addition it utilises the same art form as theatre, so it can pattern life events in a similar way. It can thus be quite comfortably accommodated into Dewey's more inclusive view of art and aesthetics. According to that perspective, role-play does indeed have the potential to be a complete theatre art form, despite the differences that were identified by Langer (1979) and Abbs (1994, 1987) in their more restricted interpretations. The issues they raise, concerning the need of a script and an audience for theatre art to exist, become superseded once we adopt Dewey's more inclusive view of what constitutes art and the aesthetic.

Dewey's perception of theatre not only appears to present a more suitable model for appreciating the art potential of role-play, but it also fits well with concepts of drama-in-education. Drama-in-education recognises how drama can be used as a powerful strategy for learning, but it also perceives itself *as an art form* that can promote aesthetic understanding. Drama-in-education has developed an extensive literature that examines how it functions as an art form. This is of

particular importance to us because drama-in-education defines itself as a learning strategy, and therefore is most closely aligned to role-play.

In fact, role-play is seen as being at the heart of drama-in-education. Landy reinforces this connection and argues that:

Without role there can be no drama (1991, p. 29).

Both role-play in adult education and drama-in-education in children's education have their basis in improvisational forms of theatre. The only difference between the two is that drama-in-education sees itself as an art form rather than a vocational training tool, and is associated with pedagogy rather than andragogy. However, both are concerned with using role-play as a learning strategy. This key commonality is of great importance to the present arguments. Role-play seems to share the same palette of colours as drama-in-education, although in the end it paints a different picture.

We need to examine why drama-in-education sees itself particularly as an art form, and whether this makes a difference to the kind of learning that it promotes.

Drama-in-education claims that it is not just a means for learning other subjects (for example the historical facts surrounding the Watergate scandal) or for observing power relationships and interpersonal communication, but is also concerned with aesthetic education (Bolton 1984, 2000; O'Toole 1992). The facilitator and participants of a drama highlight theatre form as an important part of its learning content. This distinction sets drama-in-education apart from role-play in adult education. But if it is possible for drama-in-education to combine its

usefulness as a learning tool with its power to promote aesthetic understanding, then might not role-play in adult education surely do the same? And might role-play also benefit from developing its potential as an art form? This only becomes possible, however, once there is a clear understanding of the different elements of theatre form, and how each contributes to the aesthetic learning experience.

I shall, therefore, in the next chapter, examine further what constitutes significant form in drama-in-education and how this form can be used to develop drama into an art form without the benefit of either an audience or a script. Dewey (1934) has suggested that this is theoretically possible. We should be aware, however, that the lack of a conventional audience is likely to alter the dynamic of the aesthetic experience as well as the kind of learning that takes place. Since drama-in-education utilises art form and has role-play as its core component (Bolton & Heathcote 1999), it is well positioned to illuminate how the aesthetic can function in an educational setting. It may be able to demonstrate how participants, through an engagement with the aesthetic aspects of drama, can be involved in the event but also distanced enough from it to appreciate (yet not be lost in) the emotional aspects of the experience. By now investigating drama-in-education in some detail I hope to see if role-play in adult education can do more than just paint a vocational picture, but be a work of art as well.

Chapter 6.

The art of drama-in-education

In Chapter 1, I described the uneasy relationship that has existed in the past between drama-in-education and the theatre. In simple terms, drama-in-education was seen to be process-orientated whereas theatre was product or performance-focused. This was less of an issue in Australia than overseas, but in any event it has now changed. Bolton (2000), in his article 'It's All Theatre', confirms this shift in thinking. Bolton's direct linking of theatre to drama-in-education, and his emphasis on how drama-in-education is an art form that can promote aesthetic learning, are important recent developments to support my case for locating role-play within the theatre arts.

For Bolton, it is the conscious use of theatre form that allows drama-in-education to claim its status as a theatre art. The elements that make up the 'significant form' of theatre are seen as providing the foundation for

the development of drama as a tool for aesthetic learning. Once there is an understanding of theatre form, then it can be used to change drama into art. Bolton (1986) proposes three criteria which can be used to help determine whether a dramatic event is also a form of artistic expression. These are a sense of time, a quality of meaning, and a quality of feeling.

A sense of time

A sense of time refers to the special moment that is created in drama. This is what Langer identified as the “perpetual present” (1979, p. 307). Bolton emphasises that “drama as an art form is related to ‘the here and now’”, but that it paradoxically creates a form of present that continually looks backwards and forwards and carries with it “the tension of ‘commitments and consequences’” (1986, p. 140). Once a person shifts from everyday time into responding imaginatively – ‘as if they were themselves or another person in a different space and moment – they have moved into dramatic time. It is this consciousness of drama’s unique representation of time that indicates that artistic activity is taking place. The shift into ‘dramatic time’ allows events to be viewed differently and presents the possibility for new meaning to be created.

Quality of meaning

The quality of meaning that can be created through the use of dramatic form also determines whether drama is art. For Bolton (1986) it is the potent mix of the symbolic and the everyday that exists in drama that can create multiple layers of meaning. A symbol is “something used or

regarded as standing for or representing something else” (Macquarie Dictionary 1997). The example of a child playing the part of Robin Hood demonstrates how this operates in practice. The drama is rooted in concrete action such as in the case of Robin Hood, the manipulation of a sword. But the sword is also imbued with a symbolic quality, and could represent freedom from the tyranny of oppression. Witkin (1974) calls this process ‘symbolic abstraction’, and it is the development of this level of meaning in drama that “meets the requirements of the art form” (Bolton 1986, p. 141).

Quality of feeling

Bolton also suggests, however, that the meaning of an aesthetic symbol is “not accessible to discursive description” (1986 p. 141), and that a quality of feeling has to be present to complete our understanding of drama as an art form. This ‘feeling quality’ does not refer to the raw emotions that are engendered by actual events and objects but to an “intelligence of feeling” (Reid 1980). This refers to emotion that has been filtered through an appreciation of drama’s symbolic form. It involves the kind of ‘engaged detachment’ that Dewey (1934) and States (1985) described in the previous chapter. It is closely linked to ideas of aesthetic responding (Langer 1979; Abbs 1987; Dewey 1934).

At this point it is useful to re-examine Heathcote’s school children’s Watergate waxworks project which I described in Chapter 4. This will help to clarify how drama can function as an art form and utilise the crucial elements identified above – a sense of time, a quality of meaning and a quality of feeling. This museum scenario demonstrates how

different layers of understanding can be created within the drama, transforming it into an artistic as well as an educational activity.

The situation chosen was highly dramatic and emotional because it related to a man and a government in crisis. The focus, however, was noticeably a distanced one filtered through the perceptions of the 'museum curators'. They were interpreting the crisis for a public audience and showing why it was a significant moment in American history. The drama consequently became less concerned with the actual desperate conditions Nixon found himself embroiled in, and more with wider issues such as deception, and personal and political morality. The dramatic form chosen changed the quality of feeling in the scenario from a highly emotionally charged one to one where the emotional impact was tempered through critical reflection.

In Heathcote's lesson, different levels of meaning were created through the development of still pictures depicting a selection of significant events in the Watergate scandal. In addition to the pictures that had to convey feelings as well as depict situations, the surface and hidden dialogues of the chief characters in the drama were revealed by the notes on their shoulders. Time was deliberately slowed down to allow for concentration and contemplation of the different—and often contradictory—layers of meaning.

The actual events of the Watergate scandal were abstracted through the use of dramatic form into a highly stylised representation of the situation. Creating waxwork pictures put the emphasis on symbolic representation, as the display had to crystallise the key elements of this political crisis. These pictures were not just about a moment in history, but the interpretation of these events by school children as museum

curators, and then the reinterpretation of these by a public audience. It is this kind of use of dramatic form that adds the layers of meaning to a situation and indicates that it has moved on from a simple re-enactment of events to an art form.

In this kind of dramatic situation participants are involved in the drama as actors, but they are actors whose job it is to 'spectate' as an audience might do. In their role as museum curators the children had to think all the time what effect their waxwork display would have on a public audience. They had to take on the role of an audience as they viewed their displays, and decided if they communicated the key issues of Watergate effectively. This allowed participants space to engage in all aspects of the aesthetics of theatre art and, through their role-play, experience being both engaged yet detached from the dramatic situation.

The actor as audience: self-spectatorship

The problem of whether theatre only exists if it has an audience is one that can be approached through Bolton's concept of 'self-spectatorship'. The idea behind this concept is that:

When we make anything we are spectators to it (2000, p. 24).

He gives an example of a child drawing a picture of his mother and at the same time being the audience to what has been created. According to Bolton, self-spectatorship promotes a special kind of attention and noticing. This has already been identified as a crucial factor in aesthetic responding. This can only occur if the audience or self-spectator can see

what is being created in the drama as “*meaningful in a fictional context*” (2000, p. 25). It has to go beyond the particular action, and through the creation of aesthetic symbols, to signify something more universal.

One of the ways that self-spectatorship is encouraged is through the placing of action in a theatre space. Even if this space is just an allocated section of a classroom, it will still have a special focus and this will affect the concentration of the people who enter this space and the way action is perceived. As States (1985) pointed out, once an action is put on stage it gains a particularity which it would not have in everyday life. Bolton gives the example of how this occurs:

A football match played on stage takes on what Bruce Wiltshire calls ‘an incarnated universal’. Without sacrificing its particularity, it ‘stands for’ football matches and their related themes of competition, opposing sides, rivalry, sportsmanship, rules or whatever the dramatist wants it to point to. The meaning lies both in the particular and in its generalisations and the audience treats it like fiction, both enjoying what is happening and looking for the implications of what is happening. They ask themselves “What is happening here?” (2000, p. 25).

The same thing happens in classroom drama when a chair is placed in a space that has been nominated as a stage. It becomes significant and the children will begin to imagine how and why it is important. If the children then place another chair on the stage they will be looking at what they are creating and starting to manipulate the drama space. Although they are not a conventional audience, they are reading significant meaning into what they are doing. They are beginning to

understand more about the structure of drama and what gives this form its particular artistic strength. This action also promotes a special form of concentration, which is a vital component of aesthetic appreciation.

Suspension of form

Another characteristic linking drama-in-education to theatre is the notion that dramatic narrative can sustain a break—because its theatre form signals to the audience (self-spectators) that there will be a resumption and completion of the unfinished work (Bolton 2000). The suspension of the dramatic action is integral to the way that drama-in-education operates as a learning strategy. It is normal for breaks to be used in drama-in-education to allow students to deepen their understanding of the dramatic event. This might be achieved through participants engaging in research into their roles and responsibilities. They may use the break for reflection on the action that has just occurred and then rejoin the drama with increased insight and understanding.

This happened when the children in role as museum curators in the Watergate drama had to research documents in order to find out more about the background to the Nixon scandal, and so give their waxworks historical credibility.

Drama-in-education's theatrical form is strong enough to sustain breaks. Stopping and starting the drama does not destroy the experience for participants. On the contrary it can actually intensify

their understanding. It can also heighten the dramatic tension that is generated when an incomplete dramatic form awaits completion.

Through sense of time, quality of meaning, quality of feeling, self-spectatorship and suspension of form, Bolton presents a strong argument for positioning drama-in-education in the realm of theatre art. He uses principles of aesthetic theory to develop criteria for judging how a drama activity can qualify as art. His concept of self-spectatorship in particular demonstrates how actors in a drama can also be an audience to their actions.

Bolton argues that if he is right, then it follows that there is a case for a change of thinking among drama practitioners:

If everyone knows that everything they make is theatre then...all teachers would recognise they are sharing the same common ground. All drama courses, all drama activities, will be seen as practising one or more theatrical genres. All attempts to weave new theories will have the basic principles of theatre as their shared point of departure. We can then acknowledge, respect, enjoy and understand important differences in emphasis and practice (2000, p. 28).

Once drama-in-education is acknowledged as being both an art form *and* a learning process this opens the way for role-play—sharing a similar form—to position itself as an arts learning strategy in adult education. Role-play's potential would be to develop a different kind of learning, a learning based on aesthetic understanding. Bolton summarises what this involves:

Dramatic action as a tool for learning...rests in its capacity (1) to separate and objectify an event and (2) to break down established concepts and perceptions (1984, pp. 142-3).

What interests me as an adult educator is the ability of drama and role-play to detach and re-present events so they can be perceived differently. This can also provide answers for dealing with the problems of engagement and disengagement of participants in role-play. But perhaps the greatest strength of this understanding lies in realising its potential to develop learning that is transformative. Transformative learning challenges both individual and group perceptions of the world (Mezirow 1991). Once transformative learning enters the picture role-play's interests become even more closely connected with adult education.

This connection will be pursued further in Chapter 8, when I will focus on what can be learned through role-play as a theatre art form and whether role-play of this kind can be seen as a tool for transformative learning. Before that, however, Bolton's theoretical framework for drama as an art form first needs some further testing for its validity. Does it really provide a secure framework for reappraising role-play practice in adult education?

Bolton (1984, 1986, 2000) stresses that an appreciation of drama-in-education's significant form is the key to understanding how it functions as theatre art. He suggests in general terms what theatre form is, but other particular features are not mentioned in the article (2000) but appear in Bolton's earlier writing. I shall now refer to this and present descriptions by Bolton and O'Toole of the key features of dramatic form. Role-play in adult education can only consciously use

art form as a learning approach when there is a full appreciation of these features.

I shall then explore how participants can function as an audience at the same time as they are taking part in the dramatic action. I admit to having some difficulties accepting Bolton's concept of the self-spectator and the parallels he makes between the child drawing a picture for her mother and drama. A finished picture is quite different from a drama event because it is an object that can be physically separated from the person who is the drawer, and looked at from a distance. Drama-in-education is insubstantial and transitory in nature. It requires full participation and involvement in the action and does not make the same allowances for participants to stand back and look at the piece as a whole.

It is hard to relate the concept of the self-spectator directly to that of a theatre audience. A self-spectator is looking at what they are creating or have created, rather than being absorbed in what someone else presents to them. These audiences seem to have a different context and purpose from each other.

If I cannot be convinced that the participant in a drama can simultaneously function as an audience then the idea that drama is an art form that can promote aesthetic learning would once again become problematic. It is the special nature of aesthetic responding that interests me in terms of how to approach role-play in adult education, as it addresses most directly problems of participant engagement and disengagement and potentially has the power to transform participants' perceptions of an event. It is these issues that I will examine now.

The form of drama

In 'Towards a Theory of Drama', Bolton describes his concept of theatre form and what it means in practice. He identifies five categories, and proposes that these combine to make up the essential elements of theatre form (1979, p. 75). These are tension, focus, surprise, contrast and symbolisation. O'Toole provides a model (Fig. 4) that offers a more detailed explanation of what constitutes dramatic form, and argues that "there are identifiable elements which are present in all drama and which have to be present for an event to be called a drama" (1992, p. 5).

Although O'Toole's model presents dramatic form in a more detailed and dynamic fashion, it also incorporates most of the elements identified by Bolton. I shall therefore use O'Toole's categories as the basis for my examination—with the understanding that they are adequately consistent with Bolton's schema.

A better understanding of these elements will help determine whether role-play also shares theatre's dramatic form and can confidently claim an arts heritage. Most importantly, a detailed study of dramatic form may reveal how role-play can fulfill its potential as a theatre arts learning strategy in adult education.

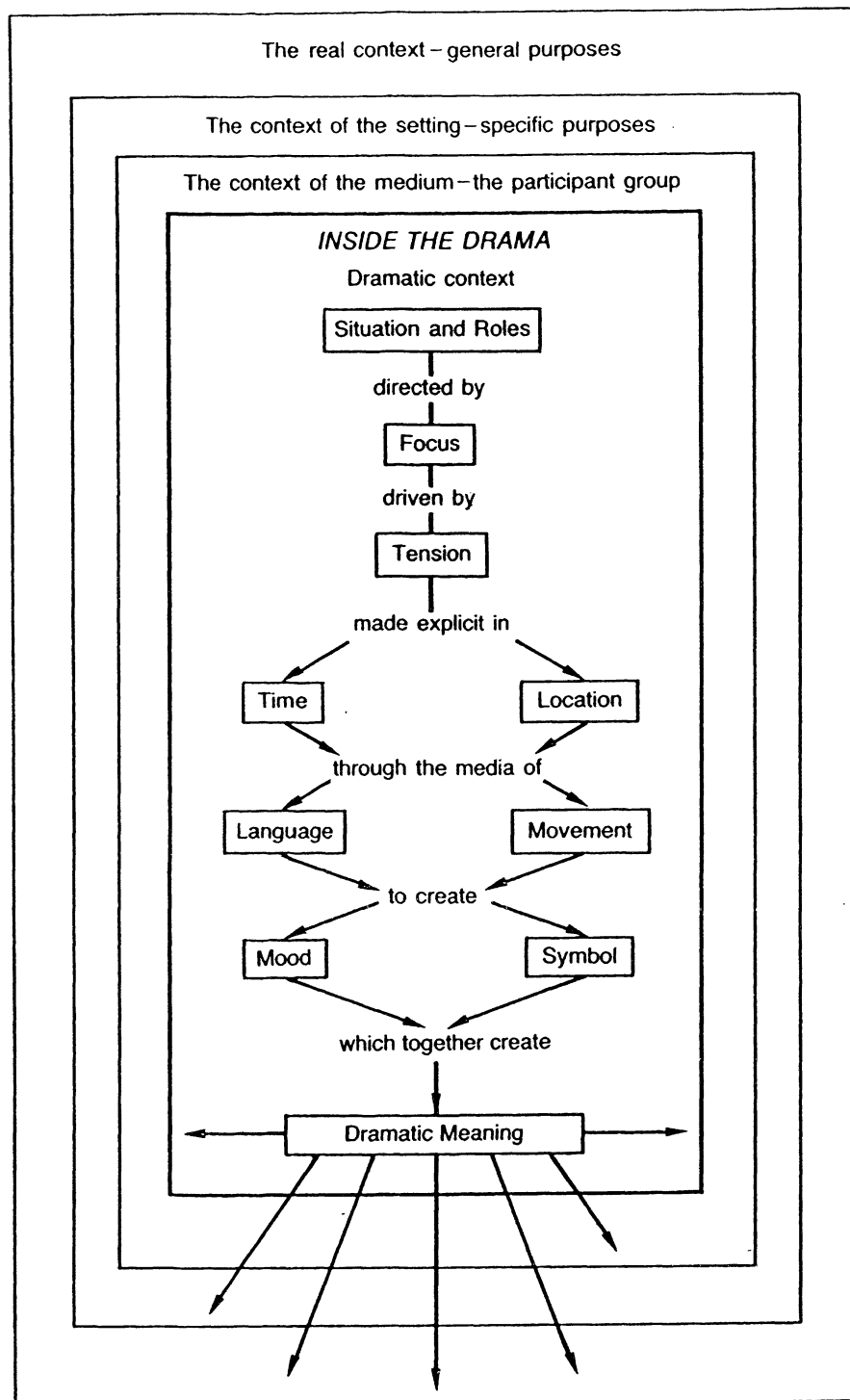


Figure 1 Dramawise + model: the elements of dramatic form

Fig. 4: O'Toole's Model of Dramatic Form

Tension

In O'Toole's model, theatre form creates tension through its unique presentation of the past and future in present time. Tension is part of the dynamics of the drama where incomplete action moves towards completion. Tension resides in how people and events will shape that completion. The element of tension can be further enhanced through the characters in a drama being constrained from doing what they want to be doing. Bolton (1990) goes as far as to suggest that "drama is the art of constraint" (in O'Toole 1992, p. 27). The audience is encouraged first to identify with a character or characters in a play and then share their frustration as they are thwarted from achieving their goals. An illustration may make this point clearer.

A recent production I saw of Tennessee Williams' 'The Glass Menagerie' by the Sydney Theatre Company contained many examples of how constraints on a character can create tension within the drama. One of the goals in the play was for Laura, the sister of the story's narrator Tom, to receive a 'gentleman caller', form a relationship and get married. She was, however, constrained by being crippled, painfully shy and intimidated by an overbearing mother. When Tom encourages his friend to pay the family a visit, the 'gentleman caller' is constrained from forming a relationship with Laura because he is self-absorbed and already engaged to someone else. The audience wills the characters to overcome their constraints and realise their goals. This is what creates the dramatic tension for the audience and the actors in the play.

This element of dramatic form is normally present even in a simple role-play. For example, in role-playing an interview situation there will

be the goal of the interviewee wanting the job and the constraint of having to satisfy the people on the interview panel before she can get it.

Dramatic tension is also evident in the drama-in-education Watergate example. The curators' goal was to mount an exhibition on Watergate for the public. They were constrained by a limited time frame and having only 'wax models' to work with.

Focus

O'Toole's element of 'focus' relates to the way any dramatic event is given significance because it selects the most interesting elements of life and then places these on a stage for intense scrutiny. O'Toole refers to this as "framing the action" (1992, p. 109). This concept of framing originates from Goffman (1975), and was first commandeered for use in drama-in-education by Heathcote (1984). It has been developed and used as a reference point for drama-in-education ever since:

Drama is like a picture frame with a range of interesting pictures that fit inside it. Once you have the frame you can keep swapping the pictures around until you have the one that suits your purpose (Carroll 1986, p. 7).

The kind of frame chosen will influence the focus of the drama, as well as how it develops and the kind of learning that might emerge from it. For example, if the Watergate drama had been framed as a domestic soap opera between Nixon and his wife Pat, the dramatic focus and its inherent learning possibilities would have been very different. It is not only the choice of focus for the dramatic situation that is an important

part of the dramatic form, but also the focus that is adopted by the role-players. The children involved in the 'Watergate soap' would have been taking on the roles of the real people in the political scandal, which would have required them to adopt a subjective perspective, rather than the more objective focus of museum curators.

Any role-play activity will have a particular focus. In a role-play interview, for example, the focus is usually on the interview itself. However, there is also the possibility for this situation to be 'framed' differently. The role-play could show the interviewers discussing their strategy for conducting the interview before it takes place. Or it could be set-up as a TV talk-show where a TV host, specialists in the field (role-played by students) and an invited audience discuss how to be successful in interviews. Both these alternative scenarios would present a quite different focus.

These examples also show how framing, or choosing an appropriate dramatic focus, is closely connected to ideas of dramatic distancing. The TV scenario provides a more distanced focus than that of the actual interview, as there is less obvious personal involvement. This is significant in terms of the problems of engagement and disengagement that I have identified as key issues in role-play in adult education. Therefore the issue of focus will be investigated further in Chapter 7, where I shall propose a new approach to role-play practice.

Surprise and contrast

The elements of 'surprise' and 'contrast' are self-explanatory because the terms carry more or less the same meaning as in everyday usage.

'Surprise' refers to the introduction of the unexpected into the drama. This could be achieved by the facilitator temporarily adopting a role that provided new challenges for participants in the drama.

For example, in the Watergate drama the facilitator could take on the role of an exhibition publicist. She would arrive to tell the curators that Nixon's wife Pat had just phoned to say that she would be attending the opening night of the exhibition and was interested to see how her dead husband had been depicted. The introduction of this surprise element would provide a dilemma for the curators. They would have to decide whether the critical representation of the story in waxwork they had provided for the public would be acceptable to someone personally involved with Nixon at the time of the Watergate scandal. They would also have to decide if any changes had to be made to accommodate this particular member of their audience and, if they did, what moral implications this decision might carry.

'Contrast' refers to the way difference can be highlighted within the drama. This might, to give just a few examples, be achieved through the contrast of height and depth, light and shade, noise and silence. In the Watergate drama the curators might decide to present a waxwork display of Nixon at the height of his powers and place the figure on a podium that raised him to an impressive height. Waxworks depicting his downfall could be placed at ground level in order to represent both physically and metaphorically his loss of power and moral stature.

Symbolisation

O'Toole views this metaphoric level of presentation and the understanding it promotes as being part of the symbolic nature of drama. Bolton describes the importance of this symbolic level as being "related to depth of meaning in drama-in-education" (1987, p. 83). A symbol is something that stands for or represents something else. For example, in the children's Watergate drama there is a waxwork scene where Nixon points at Russia on the globe on his desk. The globe is not only a symbolic representation of the world but also a symbol of Nixon's powerful place in the world and his ability as a world leader to impact upon it. This small object, the globe, represents much larger issues, and contains the potential for generating complex meanings. As O'Toole points out:

Symbol is of course crucial to drama—drama is a symbolising activity, incorporating all the stages of symbolisation from purely iconic imitation or 'mimesis', through the associative to the metaphorical, the abstractly referential and thus fully dramatic symbol (1992, p. 42).

'The Glass Menagerie', previously mentioned, provides a useful example of a fully developed dramatic symbol. The glass animals that Laura collects are symbolic of her fragility and isolation from the outside world. When her favourite glass animal is broken during the gentleman caller's visit, there is an awareness that any hope that Laura had of becoming socially confident and attractive has also been destroyed. The dramatic symbol is a powerful messenger of meaning and an integral feature of drama as an art form.

Tension, focus, surprise and contrast, and symbolisation are also constituents of role-play. However, because role-play is not customarily perceived as a dramatic art form, these are not acknowledged as elements that can be utilised by those facilitating or participating in role-play in adult education. Once role-play's theatrical form is recognised, the elements are available for use. Role-play can be changed from being a purely functional, skills-learning strategy into an art form capable of generating complex levels of meaning. It then has the potential to alter participants' perception of an event and generate an aesthetic understanding. That would take role-play considerably beyond establishing whether, say, an interviewee could competently demonstrate positive non-verbal communication at a job interview.

We have discussed theatre form which, as Bolton (1995) notes, is an essential feature of drama as an art form, integral to the development of its aesthetic. The other key feature needed to complete the aesthetic is the audience factor. This has already been discussed earlier but has not yet been fully resolved. We have noted how Dewey (1934) suggests that participatory drama—as a community activity—can theoretically still qualify as an art form. But how this is to operate in practice is less clear.

I have also pointed out that Bolton's (2000) concept of the 'self-spectator' may be flawed. It certainly needs further examination. It is linked to the idea that whenever a person enters a clearly defined dramatic space, there is a shift in their perception as they move from the everyday into the imaginary. This shift of consciousness is often referred to as 'metaxis'. This area will now be investigated further. By studying metaxis I hope to get a better idea of how the actor can also be an audience within a drama event. If that can be achieved, the final piece of the aesthetic puzzle will fit into place.

Metaxis: the interaction between the real and the fictional in drama

O'Toole (1992) suggests that in theatre there always exists the dual awareness of being an actor and yet watching or being an audience to one's own performance. This special state of consciousness arises because of the interaction or metaxis between the fictional and real contexts of the drama.

For Landy, metaxis is the paradox a participant in a role-play experiences when "I am me but not me at the same time" (1991, p. 29). For Bolton, metaxis occurs when there is a conscious "interplay between the actual and the fictitious" (1984, p. 141). We might describe this as the Hamlet dilemma ('To be or not to be'), but with a subtle twist—'To be *and* not to be'.

Professional actors understand that metaxis is an integral part of the acting experience. They realise that if they did not utilise this particular state of consciousness they could not remain sane. If every time an actor took on a role they actually believed they became the person they were representing—if their character became their reality—then they would be experiencing schizophrenia rather than acting a part in a play (Cox 1978). Landy reinforces the integral part metaxis plays in acting a role:

(Metaxis) can be best understood by the relationship of actor and role where one playing at being another is also oneself at the same time. The actor Al Pacino, takes on the role of the Godfather even as he remains Al Pacino (1993, p. 359).

An example of how this occurs in a theatrical performance can be seen in an actor's reflections on playing the part of Regan for a television

program that analysed different productions of Shakespeare's play 'King Lear' (Collier 1999). In one of the bloodiest scenes of the play, Lear's daughter Regan helps her husband take revenge on Lear by putting out the eyes of Gloucester, one of Lear's faithful retainers. Immediately after this horrific act has been completed Regan turns to face the audience. The actor playing this part describes the looks of disgust and hatred directed towards her in the eyes of the audience in the front few rows that she could see beyond the stage lights, and she confronts the strangeness of this experience. The actor is in role as Regan who as a character is committed to performing an act of brutality. But she is simultaneously also herself, and as herself she is disorientated by the reaction of the audience. This, as Landy suggests, is the moment of acute awareness where the actor crystallises her ability "to live simultaneously in two levels of reality – that of everyday life and that of the imagination" (1993, p. 359).

The ability to simultaneously inhabit imaginary and real worlds has been especially refined by actors. But it is a quality that also exists in a less sophisticated fashion in children's play. When a child plays with a doll and takes on the role of mother she is moving into the world of her imagination. However, within this fictional space the child brings in her everyday life experience of 'mother' – for example whether she is gentle or harsh, caring or indifferent. In this way:

Everyday reality is transformed into drama through an act of the imagination (Landy 1994, p. 6).

Children playing, however, are usually less conscious of the subtle interplay between fiction and reality that they are experiencing. Certainly they are not as conscious of it as an adult actor would be

when performing a role in the theatre. Landy suggests this is because children are cognitively immature. The process of metaxis only becomes comprehensible when a human being is able “to engage in symbolic and projective thinking” (1994, p. 6).

This means that anyone who has reached a certain level of cognitive maturity is capable of shifting their consciousness into a state of metaxis when they are involved in an imaginative enactment. That is true whether they are performing a character in a play or engaging in a role-play. If participants in a role-play are aware of metaxis they can understand the paradoxical nature of drama. They will realise how it involves “engagement and separation, taking-on and taking-off, simultaneously existing in the two realities of the me and the not me” (Landy 1991b, p. 4). I believe the paradox of metaxis can provide answers to the problems of engagement and disengagement in role-play.

If role-play participants can experience metaxis and consciously balance the worlds of fiction and reality within a role-play, then I believe they will be less likely to find themselves in difficulty. Metaxis prevents participants from becoming totally engaged in their roles and hence unable to see the difference between fiction and reality. An awareness of metaxis can also help those who feel unable to participate. They feel the role-play is not real enough. But role-play is not meant to be real. Instead it offers a “fictional reality for the purpose of commenting or reflecting on the everyday reality” (Landy 1990, p. 223). Once this is clear, role-play can be seen as a means of representing reality and encouraging the creative exploration and practice of different roles and scenarios in a safe environment.

Dramatic enactment involves not only the separation of the person in a role-play into elements of 'me' and 'not me', but also a separation of everyday and imaginative realities. Landy notes that:

Dramatised reality is different in space, time and consequence from everyday reality (1994, p. 6).

The world of the dramatic imagination is bounded by certain expectations. It is a space for speculation and experimentation, where a person's action in role will have dramatic consequences, but those consequences will not affect what occurs in the 'real world'. The person in a role-play scenario representing an employee who is aggressive rather than assertive with the manager, and who consequently loses his or her job, is still employed 'in reality' outside the role-play.

If however, the different realities of the everyday and the imaginative are not emphasised and distinguished in a dramatic situation, seepage between the two worlds can occur. That is where problems emerge. The examples of the Prisoners' Dilemma and Star Power simulation/games described in Chapter 3 show how roles that are adopted in a simulation, and actions that are then taken, can have consequences for relationships existing outside the educational experience. In this case the fictional 'seeps into the real'. As Jones (1989, 1994, 1997) points out, this seepage can be negative and destructive for the participants. But such a situation is one where a state of metaxis does not exist for participants in the simulation. Instead the simulation generates confusion between the worlds of fiction and reality. It denies the dramatic possibility of being able to hold the two forms in mind at the same time "in a paradoxical relationship to one another" (Jones 1991b, p. 5).

Metaxis can only exist when participants are *absolutely clear* that they are involved in a dramatic, imaginative experience. I argued in Chapter 3 that in simulation and games (where role-play is usually situated in adult education) this is normally not the case. The dramatic and imaginative potential of role-play is lost when simulations focus exclusively on role function and limit themselves to pragmatic aspects of a given scenario. As Jennings notes:

Role has been removed from its associations with drama, together with the assertion that training in drama is unnecessary for effective role-play. However, what is misunderstood is that the recreation of a life situation within which to practice roles is essentially an act of the dramatic imagination (1991, p. 4).

I believe that the problems of participant detachment and involvement in role-play in adult education are closely linked to metaxis. Metaxis can only occur when the participants are *aware* that they are participating in an act of the dramatic imagination. Consequently they must be given clear signs that they are engaging in a different kind of experience, one that has particular rules of engagement. These problems are solved not by diminishing the dramatic qualities of role-play, but by highlighting them. Then participants will be able to experience a state of metaxis, realising that they are taking part in a fictional enactment that is both different from, yet related to, the real world. As Boal observes:

Here we see the phenomenon of *metaxis*: the state of belonging to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image (1995, p. 43).

The gap between the real and the fiction.

Once participants in a role-play can experience the tension of metaxis, they can begin to appreciate “the gap between the real and the fiction” (O’Toole 1992, p. 166). This stops them becoming confused. This state of consciousness can only be achieved when participants are aware that they are entering dramatic space, because this space has specific qualities which are related to its nature *as an art form*. When role-play’s dramatic form is emphasised, especially its symbolic and projective qualities, there will be a greater chance of creating a space for metaxis to develop, and for realising the aesthetic potential of role-play.

I believe the concept of metaxis provides the final piece of the aesthetic puzzle for role-play in adult education. It makes it possible for educational drama, which takes place without a conventional audience, to still have an aesthetic dimension. People who consciously take on a role are able to view themselves in their role and simultaneously be aware that they are involved in a fictional enactment. They become the audience to their acting. The drama aesthetic is complete.

I have established some important reasons why role-play should be recognised as a theatre arts strategy. Until there is a clear understanding of role-play’s theatre form, it will remain difficult to use it effectively as a teaching approach in adult education. Consequently its learning potential will remain limited. It is role-play’s theatre form that capitalises on its imaginative and creative potential. As an art form it provides participants with the opportunity to comprehend “the relationship that exists between the imagined and the real which is the key to the unique learning process offered by drama” (Somers 1995, p. 11).

However, as currently happens, when role-play gets subsumed into simulations and games, and when these are perceived as being located exclusively in the social sciences, problems arise. These problems appear to be related to a misunderstanding of the relationship between the imagined and the real. Students become confused by the elision of these two worlds and are disturbed and even distressed by this confusion.

Theatre art form is explicitly designed to encourage participants to consciously exist in the two worlds of the imagination and the everyday. It is theatre's special utilisation of time and space and its focus on symbolic representation that combine to produce a special learning environment. Once participants engage with this special dramatic space they can experience metaxis and live "simultaneously within two levels of identity: that recognised as me and that recognised as not-me" (Landy 1994, p. 5). Metaxis is the key factor that will allow role-play participants to be aware of the dynamic that exists between fiction and reality.

Once the potential of role-play to be an art form has been recognised, so can its aesthetic possibilities be realised. As Bolton points out:

...even in the most mundane use of role-play – sitting on a chair and waiting for an interview...there is at least incipiently present an aesthetic dimension, for it does use the dramatic presence, and it does isolate or bracket off a piece of living so that what occurs within the brackets has to some extent, however limited, become significant in itself (1984, pp. 143-4).

Aesthetic theory offers ideas about how those involved in dramatic situations such as role-play can experience them in a more critically detached manner. A dramatic scenario 'brackets off' a situation and allows it to be viewed differently, contemplated in a way that eliminates the distractions of the complexities of everyday life.

Drama-in-education literature offers additional models of the drama aesthetic. These models focus on how dramatic form can affect the extent to which participants are engaged or disengaged the drama and the level of critical distance that will exist. These issues are pertinent to the key problems of engagement and disengagement of participants in role-play, which were identified at the start of this thesis.

Theatre arts and related literature can provide a useful theoretical structure for understanding the dramatic nature of role-play and its particular characteristics as an art form. This in turn enables us to begin to understand its potential as a theatre arts learning strategy and how it can promote aesthetic understanding. An appreciation of art form and the aesthetic can also provide answers to the problems of participant engagement and disengagement occurring in role-play in adult education. I shall now consider the practical implications of positioning role-play as a theatre arts strategy.

Chapter 7.

Putting theory into practice

In this chapter, I will analyse five models of drama practice to assess their potential to provide a framework for using role-play as a theatre arts teaching strategy in adult education. Two of these models, playback theatre and forum theatre, have their origins in community theatre, and Brook (1986) would categorise them as rough theatre. The political content of forum theatre—especially its ability to highlight the unequal power relationships in society—strongly positions it in the rough theatre tradition. The communal story-telling which forms the basis of playback theatre aligns it to rough theatre, but there is also a focus on ritual and image. These elements link it to Brook's category of holy theatre by evoking the primitive, spiritual aspects of theatre. Both these kinds of theatre connect most closely with Dewey's (1934) concept of art as part of the everyday, rather than something to be appreciated only by the elite. They are, therefore, the most appropriate models for illuminating how role-play can be employed as a tool for aesthetic learning.

The remaining three other models of drama practice I examine have their origins in drama-in-education. Neelands (1991) categorises different forms of theatre into dramatic conventions in an attempt to show how they can be used to create learning through theatre art. The Heathcote (1984) and Carroll (1986) frame role-distance model describes the different types of roles that can be adopted. This model also demonstrates how the choice of role affects how involved or distanced participants will be in that role. Finally, Bolton (1999) provides information on how role-play can be used as a dramatic tool in all areas of learning.

I will present examples from my professional experience, and that of others, to illustrate how these models operate in practice. I want to show particularly how role-play can be facilitated so that the problems of engagement and disengagement are minimised and the emotional aspects of learning are productively utilised. I am not suggesting that the proposals being put forward here fixed or final. They are chosen and designed to provide a springboard for future discussion and research in this area.

Setting the stage

The central question that emerges once role-play is positioned as a theatre arts strategy is how to manage the dramatic dynamics of the everyday and the fictional coexisting simultaneously within a role-play scenario. This coexistence requires the actors, and the audience or self-spectators, to take an imaginative leap. They need to be aware that in theatre they are engaged in creating or interpreting imaginative

representations of reality. If they are to be successful, they have to be able to skillfully juggle the worlds of fiction and reality.

As Somers (1995) pointed out, this is the crucial factor that provides role-play with its unique power as a teaching approach and encourages the participants to change their perception of an enacted event. When this complex dynamic exists there should be no confusion between the worlds of the 'real' and the fictional. This is because the synchronisation of the imagination and the everyday promotes a special form of consciousness which leads to an apprehension of the aesthetic or the development of 'intelligent feeling' (Abbs 1994). In theatre this special form of consciousness is called metaxis. If metaxis can be generated during a role-play activity then I believe its potential as a theatre arts learning strategy can be realised.

It is the significant form of theatre that signals that theatre space can "hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature" (Shakespeare; Hamlet, Act 3 scene 2), but is also only a *reflection* of reality. A comprehension of theatre form leads to an appreciation of the way fiction and reality co-exist within that form, and therefore theatre form needs to be valued and highlighted in role-play practice.

There are five key areas that relate to theatre's significant form that I intend to examine further in this chapter. I believe they can provide insights into how to use role-play effectively as an arts strategy. They include:

1. The discrimination of 'intentional space' from everyday space
2. How to determine where the 'dramatic focus' should be in a scenario

3. The use of 'dramatic time'
4. The symbolic nature of drama
5. The impact the suspension of form can have on dramatic action.

Each of these areas will be referred to in my analysis of the five models of different drama practice.

It must be kept in mind that the different elements of form that are examined in this chapter are necessarily part of an artistic whole and therefore overlap. Each of the five models of drama practice to be analysed in this chapter includes all the elements of dramatic form that I have identified. However, some models demonstrate more clearly than others how a particular element of form is relevant to role-play practice.

I shall use the playback theatre model to explore issues of intentional space and also to see how the use of ritual can help participants discriminate between theatre space and everyday experience. The frame role-distance and dramatic conventions models highlight issues of dramatic focus, and influence either how engaged or how disengaged participants are from the drama. Bolton's (1999) model of role-play provides insights into the subtleties of dramatic timing, and also indicates how dramatic time can be manipulated to involve or distance participants in the drama. Finally, the forum theatre model shows how the symbolic elements of theatre can be developed and the suspension of form can create dramatic tension. Forum theatre has the effect of drawing participants into the drama, but also encourages them to reflect on the action that has taken place.

1. Playback theatre and the delineation of intentional space

One of the ways suggested by States (1985) and Bolton (2000) for the condition of metaxis to develop is through the careful delineation of dramatic space. There is a need to highlight that the area within which the role-play occurs is a special space where specific rules and boundaries exist that differ from the rules and boundaries of everyday life. States calls this intentional space because everything that happens in it is significant. Bolton argues that an allocated section of the teaching environment should be designated for dramatic activity, because it is this that will provide the focus for learning and intensify the concentration of participants.

This need to mark out of a special performance space has its basis in theatre's anthropological history and spiritual heritage (Carlson 1996). It also relates to Brook's (1986) concept of holy theatre. Within this perspective of theatre the space where the drama takes place is sacred. Historically, this area became significant through the use of ritual and the auspices of a shamanic figure.

It is not customary for this marking out of a significant space to happen in role-play situations in adult education. Participants normally move from their everyday role as students into a role-play with minimal signalling from the facilitator that they are about to inhabit an imaginative space that will require them to function in a different way.

I know that I am often guilty of trying to purposely avoid highlighting the shift the students make from the everyday to the 'as if' world of role-play. I attempt to make the transition as seamless as possible because I feel I do not want to draw their attention to the fact that they

are doing a role-play in case they feel uncomfortable about participating in what may be perceived as a risky strategy. I now understand that this approach could be sowing the seeds for future confusion. That is because it fails to highlight role-play's significant form and consequently how the dramatic dynamic of fiction interacts with reality.

How then can a sense that role-play takes place in an intentional space be communicated to students in adult education? Playback theatre, developed by Jonathan (Fox 1994), provides some answers to this question because it shares some of the same characteristics as role-play. It is unscripted, improvisational and employs role-taking as its key means of creating theatre. Playback theatre is also interested in helping both the audience and the participants in the drama learn from the experience. However, the main difference between playback theatre and role-play is that the former acknowledges *that it is theatre*, and consciously uses theatre form to create a state of metaxis for both the actors and the audience during a performance. I believe that role-play would benefit from using theatre form to consciously delineate the fictional from the real. In the next section I will explain—through an analysis of playback theatre—how form can clearly mark theatre's dramatic boundaries.

The ritual space of 'Playback Theatre'

Playback theatre is "...an original form of theatrical improvisation in which people tell real events from their lives, then watch them enacted on the stage" (Salas 1996, p. 6). It is sometimes called "the theatre of real life" (Stone 1997, p.7) and usually takes place in performance settings

that have a troupe of highly trained, amateur actors. They act out personal stories that members of the audience share with them. This process is mediated by a non-acting member of the playback team known as the 'conductor'.

Fox (1994), who developed Playback Theatre, was influenced by pre-literary, oral theatre. He developed it to provide a space for members of a community (the audience) to empathise with another person's story and recognise 'the red thread' of joint experience that runs through it. Salas (1996) is also aware that the playback process can bind a community together. She observes that the stories told in a playback theatre session often have a theme that connects them like "a thread holding them together, hidden but palpable" (1996, p. 6). Bellah et al. (1985) argue that:

Theatre can be a strong force for preserving social ecology, the "web of moral understandings and commitments that tie people together" (in Fox 1994, p. 212 and, p. 335).

Fox's interest is in pre-literary forms of theatre, so he is influenced by anthropological writers such as Turner (1974) and Schechner (1985). He embraces those early forms of theatre which were trance inducing, communal, redressive and attuned to the environment. For him, the spiritual and therapeutic aspects of playback theatre are of central importance:

In the extraordinary atmosphere created during a performance, where many of the conventions of social interaction and literary drama are suspended, audience members enter an unusual emotional state (Fox 1994, p. 40).

I have experienced the special quality of consciousness that playback theatre can engender in its audience and noted how this is achieved through a series of ritual practices. It is therefore relevant to explore how ritual can be used to highlight the intentional space of theatre and encourage the development of metaxis.

Playback theatre is highly ritualised. In this context ritual means “the repeated structures in space and time that provide stability and familiarity, within which can be contained the unpredictable” (Salas 1996, p. 104). This ritual consists of a conscious patterning of behaviour and provides “a consistent framework throughout a performance and from one show to another” (Salas 1996, p. 97). Stone (1997) suggests that the ultimate purpose of playback theatre is to provide “a ritual for telling stories and every story says something about the group”. Those who regularly attend playback theatre will see different stories enacted, but the process and structure of playback performances are fixed. The stage will be set with four milk crates in a line, and behind these will be a frame of some kind that can support a selection of coloured swathes of material which will be used as costumes and props throughout the performance. Two chairs are placed downstage right—one for the conductor; the other for the story-teller who comes from the audience. A selection of musical instruments will have been placed stage left (Fig. 5).

Salas describes how:

These simple objects define the empty space within, the space which will be filled with stories as yet unknown (1993, p. 101).



Fig. 5: Playback Theatre Set-up (Salas 1996)

The performance begins with the conductor, actors and musician entering the performance space. The conductor then welcomes and engages the audience whilst the actors sit on the milk crates and the musician sits by the instruments. Then, after a short warm-up where actors present 'fluid sculptures' – quick, non-verbal representations of ideas or feelings the audience communicates—a member of the audience will be asked to share a personal story with the group. The storyteller sits by the conductor who then carefully elicits a story from the audience member and asks him or her to choose actors to play the key characters in the story. Then the core of this community theatrical event takes place:

The teller will relate a personal moment, then watch the story enacted. He or she will not leave the chair until it is time to return to the audience; the teller's reaction to the story as it is dramatised will be observed by the audience and is a dramatic element in the presentation (Fox 1994, p. 37)

The conductor signals that the performance is to begin and the musician plays some music as the actors get into position forming a tableau of the first scene. Then the story is acted out. Once it has been concluded, the conductor summarises the key aspects of the story and asks the storyteller if the performance succeeded in capturing the spirit of the tale. He or she responds, and if the response is positive the storyteller returns to the audience. If it is negative then the conductor and actors will work together until the storyteller is reasonably satisfied that the story enacted was in tune with the tale that was told. Salas notes that:

Through presence, presentation, and ritual, the message is conveyed that these personal stories, these lives, are worthy of our attention and respect (1993, p. 97).

One of the interesting elements of playback theatre is the way its form requires it to move frequently from 'the here and now' into the fiction of performance and back again. It also deals with the enactment of personal stories which are potentially emotionally revealing. That is because they encourage strong involvement and identification from both the person telling the story and the audience who are watching it. Playback theatre could even be seen as providing a kind of therapeutic release for participants, and Fox admits if he had to comment on the ultimate purpose of the work, he would say "yes, it was therapeutic, and yes, it was theatre" (1994, p. 5).

How then does playback theatre effectively manage the transitions from the everyday to the fictional, and deal with the highly emotive and unpredictable nature of the personal stories that are the basis of its form? It does this through utilising many complex elements of theatre

and therapy, but ritual and projection are the ones I have identified as being the most important for understanding role-play practice in adult education. In this next section I will examine how playback theatre uses ritual as a means of creating a state of metaxis, and a device to manage the emotional content of the personal stories that are told. The issue of projection will be explored later in Chapter 8.

Transforming everyday experience into theatre

I have described the ritual element of playback theatre and the enduring nature of this framework. Fox stresses the importance of structural elements within a spontaneous, improvised theatre process:

...the use of structural 'building blocks' in improvisational performing comes as no surprise. Improvisation, while it deals in 'no structure' can only proceed by means of a diligent structure (1994, p. 146).

The deliberate manner in which the stage is set-up, the distinct phases that comprise the playback performance, and – crucially – the manner which the conductor signals these elements, all contribute to the creation of a significant space where deeply personal issues can be explored safely. It is the predictable, repetitious structure of playback theatre that provides the elements of ritual for each presentation.

This is signalled non-verbally as well as verbally throughout a performance. The stage set-up, the music that introduces each story, the way the actors stand up when they are allocated a part and move into frozen positions before the story begins, all provide non-verbal cues for

the audience. For Fox “this non-verbal ‘setting-up’ encloses the action of each story, whether humorous, mundane or traumatic, within a consistent ritualistic framework” (1994, pp. 38-39). The non-verbal nature of playback theatre is so strong that it has often been described as a ‘theatre of mime’.

Salas observes that “once the show begins, it is the conductor, primarily, who establishes and regulates the rituals of performance” (1996, p. 105). The way the conductor introduces a performance and interacts with the audience, the storyteller and actors, strongly contributes to the ritual of the playback approach. Salas also notes that “one of the conductor’s tools of ritual is his choice of language” (1996, p. 105). An examination of ‘A Verbatim Performance’ – a transcript of a playback theatre performance (Fox 1994, p. 217-261) – indicates how the conductor in playback theatre uses language to create a sense that the audience is entering into a space that has a special quality. It is a space that requires the audience to respond quite differently from the way they would in ‘everyday life’.

This transcript is divided into small sections to aid analysis. Section 5 presents the beginning of a performance and shows how the conductor speaks directly to the audience, welcoming them to playback theatre. At the same time he reminds them of the essential origins of theatre. He mentions its “old fashioned form”, which refers to times past when theatre was an integrated element of the outside environment and brought communities together to tell stories that were “not only entertaining but also helpful”. The conductor has already signalled to the audience that they will experience a different kind of theatre, one that will bind them together and be productive in some way.

In Section 20 of the transcript, the conductor points to the chair where the storyteller will sit, and indicates the importance of this place, before he engages the audience in conversation. It is this conversation – in this case the sharing of incidents that happened out of doors that day – that will generate the theme for the personal stories that the members of the audience will share during the playback theatre performance. The conductor is subtly engaging the audience in animated conversation and at the same time relaxing them, but he is also signalling the boundaries of the playback process that they are about to experience.

Section 75 of the transcript contains an example of how the intentional space of theatre is delineated through ritual. This section demonstrates how a Playback troupe introduces itself: first the conductor, then the actors and the musician. The troupe introduces itself formally, with accompanying music. This emphasises that they are part of the performance, but occupy a role that is linked to, yet still apart from, the audience. Salas describes how the way the actors introduce themselves to the audience signals the ritualistic form of playback theatre:

Eve [the actor] is speaking simply as herself, as one person to another...and the audience hears it as the unmediated communication that it is. But at the same time, they are receiving her words in the context of the ritual pattern and presence of the actor's entrance (1996, p. 97).

In contrast to the formal introduction of the acting troupe, the audience is asked by the conductor to introduce themselves to the people around them – because this kind of theatre “is much more a theatre of neighbours than strangers” (Section 75). They share a story – “something that happened to you in your house” – and break down the

communication barriers that usually exist in traditional forms of literary theatre. The conductor with his reference to “neighbours rather than strangers” is positioning the audience as a community that will share personal stories within the special space that has been set up for the playback performance.

The conductor also uses skilful questioning and repetition to highlight the ritual nature of playback theatre. The storytellers are not encouraged to just relate a story verbatim, but have their tales carefully structured by the conductor so that the essence of the story is captured in a form that the actors can use in their performance. This brief extract gives some indication of how the conductor uses repetition to shape the story and give it gravitas:

BARBARA: And he won't get off the phone. He knows I want to make a phone call...

CONDUCTOR: Uh huh

BARBARA: And he doesn't get off the phone.

CONDUCTOR: He won't get off the phone

BARBARA: He doesn't get off the phone because he knows I want to make a phone call.

CONDUCTOR: He just stays on the phone, stays on the phone. OK.

(Fox 1994, p. 41)

The phone is mentioned eight times within this short interlude. Fox suggests that when this happens “the repetitions take on almost the quality of a chant” (1994, p. 41). The effect, therefore, can be quite hypnotic, and this phenomenon mirrors early theatre's trance-inducing qualities. The speech is also non-naturalistic, almost poetic,

emphasising the symbolic quality of the language. In the case above, the phone becomes the dramatic focus of the story.

In playback theatre it is not unusual for actors to take on the part of an object, so one of them might represent the phone or a computer (which happens in Section 320 of the transcript). This is another non-naturalistic theatre device that emphasises the symbolic nature of drama. It is employed to separate the worlds of fiction and reality. The conductor here is using language to formalise or ritualise the story so that it is transformed from the everyday into the epic. This is also a distancing strategy, because, as the language becomes more formal, the personal element diminishes.

The importance of beginnings and endings

The conductor “has particular responsibility for beginnings and endings” so is responsible for clarifying the nature of the playback proceedings to the audience (Fox 1994, p. 127). It is the conductor’s job to welcome and warm-up the audience. He is also responsible for signalling the transitions that occur between the social conversations with the audience and the theatre performance. The change between these two takes place once the storytellers sit in a designated chair and begin to tell their story. This shift of focus is indicated non-verbally through the gaze of the conductor. This gaze primarily rests on the storyteller, but it also has to include the actors and audience, since the story has to be communicated to them as well.

There is a clear transition point when the conductor asks the storyteller to choose actors to play different characters in the story about to be

enacted. The focus shifts from the storyteller to the stage as the actors stand up in recognition of their responsibility. That responsibility is to tell this person's story as faithfully as possible, but in a creative way that may provide new insights into the significance of the tale. One of the actors will take on the role of the storyteller, and therefore has a particular responsibility to be 'true' to the spirit of the story.

When the story has been completed and all the key parts allocated to the actors, the conductor will deliberately move the focus to the stage. The first scene is then set up – for example:

CONDUCTOR: We'll begin by you saying goodbye to your client, right?

GERALD: OK

CONDUCTOR: And then coming into the house. And we'll just see a part of your...typical evening of this recent period in your life, OK? We'll have the office over there, and the living part of the house over here (Section 355-360).

The conductor then signals the final move from the everyday world of the story to the fictional world of theatre through the use of the imperative. He commands the storyteller and the audience to 'Watch!' This is one of the most powerful moments of transition in playback theatre, and the change of concentration that takes place at this moment is palpable. The story is then enacted without interruption. Once the performance is over the conductor concludes the proceedings and the focus returns once more to the storyteller. The conductor usually asks: 'Is that the way it happened?' (Section 615). Once the storyteller agrees that the enactment was true for him or her the final transition takes

place. The storyteller physically leaves the stage area and returns to their seat signalling that the playback performance is now over.

Fox argues that “what distinguishes theatrical from everyday performance is primarily the fictive element” (1994, p. 153). So whilst playback theatre employs a potent mix of the everyday and the fictional, Fox has carefully structured it to prevent confusion between the two. It is apparent that one of the ways he does this is through the set-up of the performance space. There is a clearly delineated area for the stage and audience, but also a transitional space where the conductor and storyteller sit at the crossroads between these two groups. This transitional place is a kind of limbo where both the conductor and storyteller communicate with the actors and audience, but at the same time remain clearly apart from them.

The different areas of the performance space are not only signalled non-verbally through the placement of furniture and props but also by the verbal and non-verbal cues of the actors. Most importantly, we have seen that the conductor plays a pivotal role in the ritual delineation of space. As already noted in the examples given above, the conductor’s job is complex and demands considerable skill. He or she is required to fulfill many different functions whilst interacting with the actors, the audience and the storyteller in turn.

What role-play can learn from playback theatre

I have described how playback theatre carefully delineates the difference between stage space and everyday space so that everyone involved in this type of community performance understands the difference between what is ‘real’ and what is fiction. Role-play could

adopt some of the ritualised processes used in playback theatre to highlight the rarefied physical space of the stage. This can create a heightened state of perception for those engaged in the performance—both actor and audience alike (States 1985).

In playback theatre it is vital that the difference between the fictional and the 'real' is highlighted because this technique deliberately uses personal material with a strong emotional content. This means that the playback experience is likely to be extremely involving for those participants who share their stories with the rest of the group. It could lead to them empathising so strongly with the drama that they become emotionally distraught.

The use of personal material with a strong emotional content is also a feature of role-play. A seemingly simple role-play that explores people being interviewed for a job will involve the participants having to think back to other interviews they have experienced. They will use this personal experience as a basis for understanding how to perform in their roles. These recollections may have strong emotions attached to them. For example, if the participants previously had bad experiences of interviews, this might trigger feelings of anger or fear. Facilitators of role-play—like playback theatre conductors—needs to understand how personal experience can be productively utilised within the framework of theatre form.

Ritual is used to distance both the storyteller and the audience from the playback drama—but the other powerful strategy in playback theatre is projection. This occurs when one of the playback actors takes on the part of the storyteller. This allows the people who have told the story to literally look at themselves from a distance. However, because they

know the actor is representing them, they also relate closely to the enactment and feel the emotion of the situation—though with more detachment than if they were acting the role themselves. Projection is a complex concept and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

This ability to watch oneself in action also closely mirrors the experience of metaxis, and promotes the dual consciousness of being “me and yet not me” at the same time (Landy 1991b, p. 4). It is this form of consciousness that lies at the heart of the aesthetic experience. Using someone else to enact a person’s experience is one strategy that could be used in role-play to promote the emotional elements of learning in a safe, structured fashion.

In playback theatre, the role of the conductor is not dissimilar to that of the facilitator. Good’s (unpublished) description of the conductor as producer, social investigator, listener/communicator and guide could also apply to the role of adult education facilitator. It is the conductor’s responsibility to signal, both verbally and non-verbally, when participants are expected to move into the world of fiction and when they should return to the everyday. It is therefore possible for facilitators to do the same.

Many of the strategies described above could be usefully employed in role-play. These include the marking of stage space as a place apart from the everyday, clear signalling of when an enactment is to begin and when it is concluded, and the use of repetition to make an event appear more significant. All could be integrated into role-play practice. The introduction of ritual processes into role-play could easily be the first step in developing it as a theatre arts teaching strategy.

The use of ritual also introduces various means of engaging and distancing participants before, during and after a dramatic event. It can help their transition from the everyday into the dramatic Schechner notes "that compared to other cultures, the modern Western tradition is weak in producing effective transitional rituals" (in Fox 1994, pp. 146-7). It is likely that the engagement and disengagement difficulties participants experience in role-play could be caused by a lack of theatre ritual.

There are, however, significant differences between playback theatre and role-play. The most important of these is clearly their use of well-trained, semi-professional, improvisatory performers to act out the personal stories. Whilst there is a strong argument that playback actors need to be carefully trained in order to sensitively and artistically interpret the stories presented to them, this could also be seen as disempowering the audience. That is because it only allows them to experience playback when the troupe is present and, even then, in a second hand, passive manner.

Nevertheless, the performance element in playback theatre is a crucial part of its particular form and one of the reasons it is able to create a special atmosphere and high level of attention from its audience. This means that there is necessarily a key difference between the audience and the performers. The actors are the ones who are involved in the physical enactment of the story whilst the rest watch. The audience supplies the 'raw material' for the performance but does not perform it itself. Both therefore, experience the event differently. Fox suggests there are occasions, however, when this division disappears, and they "are not 'audience' and 'actors' but witnesses to a communal act of affirmation" (1994, p. 152).

Despite these reservations, I believe that playback theatre's special understanding of the importance of ritual in theatre as a means of signalling the difference between the 'real' and the imagined, can provide role-play with a variety of practical strategies for the development of intentional space. It cannot, however, provide a complete model for role-play practice because of its reliance on experienced performers to interpret the personal stories provided by the audience. Other models of theatre that engage participants more fully in the drama process, and which develop a more complete framework for using role-play as an arts strategy in adult education, will now be explored.

2. Frame-analysis and dramatic focus

An understanding of dramatic space is a critical factor in the development of dramatic form, as it signals to participants that they are moving into a world of fiction when they enter this specially defined area. I will now look at the concept of 'dramatic focus' – the element of theatre form that is responsible for framing action in a way that draws attention to the particularity of an event that otherwise would pass by unnoticed.

In Chapter 4, I introduced the concept of dramatic framing when discussing how dramatic focus is developed in theatre. According to Goffman (1975), 'frame' refers to "the structure of experience that individuals have at any moment in their lives" (Muir 1992, p. 29). It consists of two aspects – the action necessary for an event to progress towards a conclusion, and the perspective from which people view the event. Heathcote (1984) adapted Goffman's frame theory for drama-in-

education so that it could be used as a tool to differentiate art from everyday experience. She presented a range of generic roles and also indicated different levels of involvement possible in a dramatic event. These have implications for how close or distanced a role will be to an event and, consequently, the kind of action and feelings that might be engendered by it.

Most importantly, Heathcote (1991) connected dramatic framing with learning in drama, for “according to how a person sees an event and how they feel part of an event, so they understand and think about the event” (Videotape B1, Dorothy Heathcote Archive). This is an issue that I shall return to when considering the kind of learning that role-play as an art form can promote.

Muir gives an example of a dramatic situation where a dead child is found in a doorway. The kind of actions, and the concerns of the person finding the child, will depend on the role adopted in this situation. If the role is that of a Police Officer, then the person will be concerned with informing their superiors of what has happened. That would involve establishing the identity of the child and finding out how they died. Their perspective is influenced by their professional role. On the contrary, the response of a layperson to finding the body will be different, as will be their concerns and future actions. As Muir points out:

The position from which we could enter the drama would be different and it is the proximity to the ‘event’ which provides the particular quality of perspective. The Police Officers are able to be more professionally ‘matter of fact’ about it and

follow their procedures. Thus frames give different perspectives (1992, p. 32).

An understanding of dramatic framing allows a facilitator to understand how the choice of role influences the level of personal involvement a participant will have within the drama or role-play. It also affects the perspective of the person in the role and the particular set of concerns they have, which in turn will lead to specific actions. The use of dramatic framing, therefore, allows facilitators to determine where the dramatic focus should be and how engaged or distanced participants will be from the chosen scenario.

This will influence the kind of learning that can arise from the role-play. For example, someone adopting a Police Officer role will be more likely to learn about the research skills needed to conduct a murder investigation than if they took on the role of a lay person.

I will now examine the Heathcote (1984) and Carroll (1986) model of framing and role-distance in more detail, in order to develop a better understanding of how dramatic focus affects participants' perspective of a dramatic event and their engagement and disengagement from a role-play activity.

The frame presented in this model (Fig. 6) is three-dimensional, but highlights two areas of special interest—surface and depth. Surface refers to the particular style or theatrical convention being used in the drama. Neelands describes conventions as:

...indicators of the way in which time, space and presence can interact and be imaginatively shaped to create different kinds of meanings in

theatre. Different conventions will, therefore, emphasise different qualities in the theatrical possibilities of time, space and human presence (1991, p. 4).

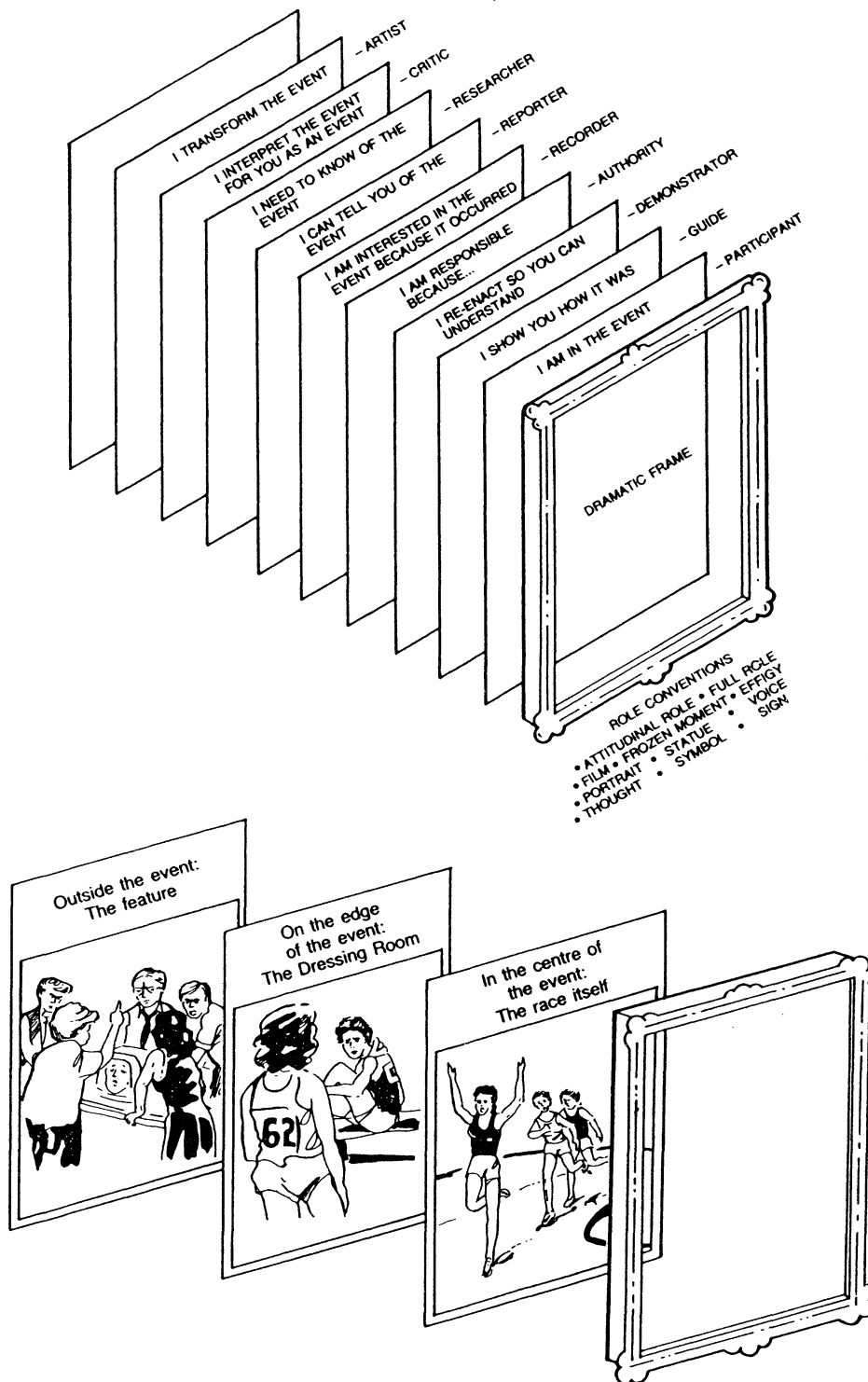


Fig. 6: *Frame Role-Distance Model* (Heathcote & Carroll 1986)

For example, the theatrical convention of improvisation responds closely to how the pace of real time and space is used naturalistically. The still image convention that was used in the Watergate waxwork drama freezes time so that a particular dramatic moment can be arrested and become a significant point of the dramatic focus.

A wide range of theatre conventions have been identified and classified. These are explored in more detail later on in this chapter. It is these theatre conventions that make-up the 'surface' frame.

'Depth' refers to the role-distance adopted by participants in the drama. This is controlled by the viewpoint of those taking on a role and the relation they have to what Carroll calls the 'focus event', which is the event at the centre of the dramatic situation (in O'Toole 1992, p. 111). The categories of depth employed by Heathcote and Carroll (1986) correspond closely to those used by Goffman (1975) in his continuum model of 'The Significance of Social Occasions' (Fig. 3 in Chapter 4). At one end of Goffman's continuum are roles that demand full participation and involvement ("I live"); at the other end are roles that have been abstracted and formalised, where some perform for others who watch rather than participate ("I show how life is lived"). The more formal the situation, the more distanced it becomes in Goffman's analysis.

Heathcote and Carroll also follow this pattern when categorising levels of role depth. At one end of their frame continuum is the participant role, the person who is actually experiencing the event. At the other end is the role of the artist—the person who transforms the event into an art form, just as the actor does during a theatre performance. Other roles

included in the continuum move the participant gradually from being in an event to critiquing the event from the outside.

If we re-examine the Watergate example in Chapter 5, the museum curator roles adopted by the children have significant depth and distance. The children are not participants in the focus event itself—the Watergate scandal—but they are critics, interpreting and possibly transforming the event for others. They are operating in a role perspective that resides at the formal, most distanced end of the frame and within a dramatic convention that freezes time and motion. This combination of slow surface time and a distanced role viewpoint allows the drama to be critical and contemplative.

Heathcote and Carroll's frame role-distance model offers some interesting insights into the way role-play can be influenced by the dramatic convention the group or tutor chooses to work with, as well as by the kind of role perspective adopted. Both these factors will determine how engaged or distanced participants will be from the focus event they are exploring dramatically. This has important implications for dealing with the problems of engagement and disengagement that arise during role-play in adult education. The concept of 'role-distance' also can provide a rationale for how a participant in a drama situation can simultaneously be an audience and actor within the event. The greater the distance of the role, the more the participants become observers and critics of the drama—a participating audience. As O'Toole points out:

...the greater the distance which participants adopt from experiencing the focus event as a character within it, the more detachment about the event will be natural to the role.

This means that levels of externalisation and alienation of understanding about the subject matter can occur within the fictional context, that is the drama itself (1992, p. 112).

The framing and role-distance model demonstrates that participant involvement in a role-play can be altered according to the dramatic convention employed and according to the kind of viewpoint adopted by the person in role, to the focus event. The less naturalistic the convention (e.g. still image), the more there is potential for a participant to maintain a detached engagement with the drama. The more distanced the role viewpoint, the more critical the participant can be of the focus event and able to observe it like an audience would.

This model provides a useful framework for thinking about issues of engagement and disengagement in role-play. An adult educator familiar with the concept of dramatic framing can choose dramatic conventions and roles with an awareness of their power to involve or distance participants from the dramatic event being explored. Moreover, if they observe someone getting too emotionally involved in a role, they can alter the dramatic convention they are working with and implement one from the less naturalistic end of the scale, such as still pictures or mime. Alternatively, they could ask the participant to take on another role that demands them to be more critical of the event they are acting out—for example that of a media figure—and get them to report on the event that is taking place.

The Heathcote (1984) and Carroll (1986) model of framing and role-distance stresses the importance of 'surface' and 'depth' in the development of any dramatic event. Whilst the surface elements are identified as relating to the kind of dramatic convention or theatre form

employed, the exact nature of these are not described in detail. However, as mentioned earlier, Neelands (1991) in his book 'Structuring Drama Work', has attempted to provide a handbook of the available forms in theatre and drama. Carey (1995), Owens and Barber (1997) have used this as a basis for developing their own list of dramatic conventions, whilst Mather (1996) has translated the conventions into a pictorial form.

If the Heathcote and Carroll model is to be utilised fully, I believe there needs to be a full appreciation of the range of dramatic conventions available, and also the way they can affect the dramatic focus of a role-play. These will now be illustrated in detail.

3. Dramatic conventions and dramatic focus

Owens and Barber describe dramatic conventions as being "a way of organising time, space and action to create meaning" (1997, p. 22). Neelands (1991) suggests they can be categorised into groups and believes they can provide a complete framework for drama practice. Both authors suggest that dramatic conventions are the 'raw matter' of dramatic form and represent the different ways it can be used to create artistic meaning. Neelands (1991) initially identified forty-seven conventions that could be used in drama-in-education practice, but by the time Mather (1996) adapted them into a pictorial form, the number of conventions had grown to one hundred and two!

It is not practical for the purpose of this thesis to describe all the different conventions that have been developed (though selected summaries of the key groupings are shown in Appendix 2). I will

instead focus on a limited range of conventions and demonstrate how these could be used in the role-play situation. All the writers mentioned above classify the conventions in different ways, and this has implications for how they can be used as a learning tool. Before examining these classifications in detail I will explain why a knowledge of dramatic conventions is essential for understanding how role-play can function as a theatre arts strategy.

Mather, in arguing why an understanding of dramatic conventions is important, describes the impact they had on his practice:

They allowed me for the first time to clearly articulate and communicate my understandings of the processes of this subject (drama-in-education) and they have given me a clear framework with which to structure lessons (1996, p. 37).

Dramatic conventions provided Mather with a language that enabled him to communicate the subtle, abstract ideas of significant form in a practical, concrete manner. An example of two conventions he identified in his pictorial groupings were still image and thought tracking.

When still image is mentioned, participants understand that this means they are to use their bodies to create a frozen picture of an event. If thought tracking is proposed, they know that this convention requires them to stop the drama momentarily so that they can speak out loud the thoughts of the person they are representing in role.

Drama conventions do not just represent a means for a one-way communication between the drama facilitator and students, but also

provide participants with a language that 'empowers' them to discuss the art form of drama. Once students have learned the language of drama conventions, "they are in a position to make negotiated decisions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of using certain conventions in certain situations" (Mather 1996, p. 37). Participants become confident manipulators of the significant form of drama and therefore are not dependent on the facilitator for making their art. Owens and Barber emphasise how the students who acquire the language of dramatic conventions are able to make suggestions about form as well as content and will accordingly be "improving their drama and theatre skills, knowledge and understanding" (1997, p. 22).

An appreciation of how to use drama conventions can also help solve issues of participant engagement or detachment in role-play. That is because each convention offers a different dramatic focus. Owens and Barber note how:

Different conventions also allow for different levels of participation which often means at one end of the scale individuals can participate and contribute without feeling that they have to do anything embarrassing. At the same time, other individuals can take on a big personal challenge (1997, p. 22).

For example, a person who is asked to participate in a still image convention has only to concentrate on their non-verbal communication rather than deal with the complexities of integrating movement and dialogue into a scenario. The abstract nature of this convention allows the participant to remain relatively detached and encourages their gradual involvement in the drama.

Another person, however, could take on the challenge of working in the 'Come on Down!' convention where "a radical shift of style is introduced" and a high level of performance demanded (Neelands 1991, p. 42). Here the dramatic action is translated into a popular form such as a game show format, soap opera or 'end of the pier' Pierrot show as Joan Littlewood famously created in her production of 'Oh What A Lovely War'.

I will provide a detailed example of how dramatic conventions can affect the dramatic focus of a role-play and subsequently the levels of involvement expected from participants. Before I do this, I need to describe the different ways dramatic conventions are identified and grouped. This is necessary because these groupings or categorisations are used to differentiate how the various conventions function dramatically. I begin with Neelands' (1991) listing and categorisation of dramatic conventions because his model provided the basis for the models that followed.

Neelands proposes that drama is created through "the actors' fictional and symbolic uses of human presence in time and space" (1991, p.4), enhanced by the symbolic use of objects, light and sound. Dramatic conventions are a description of "the way in which *time*, *space* and *presence* can interact and be imaginatively shaped to create different kinds of meanings in theatre" (1991, p. 4). They are directly linked to the elements of theatre form identified in Chapter 6 and in the beginning of this present chapter.

Neelands identifies forty-seven dramatic conventions, then categorises these into four groups that represent different aspects of dramatic action: context-building, narrative, poetic and reflective. Context-

building action is concerned with developing the dramatic situation— setting the scene so that it has credibility. Narrative action focuses on the storyline and the ‘what happens next’ element; it is the driving force of the drama. Poetic action is interested in valuing the symbolic and metaphoric possibilities inherent in the dramatic situation and discovering a means of “holding the essence of an experience” (Neelands 1991, p. 7). Reflective action allows space for participants to consider what they have experienced and focus on the meanings that have been created for individuals and for the group as a whole.

For example, the convention ‘defining space’ is concerned with the use of available furniture and props to represent the scenario of the role-play. It is a convention that can be used to help mark out the dramatic boundaries of the situation to be explored and give it a precise setting. It is categorised as belonging to the context-building action section and develops the interests of that group. Once the scene has been set there may be a need to drive the story forward, so a narrative action convention could be utilised next. Symbolic and reflective action can also be selected as needed within the design of the arts learning process.

The key idea behind Neeland’s dramatic conventions model is to provide facilitators with a range of theatrical approaches so they can consciously choose those appropriate to the students’ artistic and educational needs. As Neelands points out in ‘Structuring Drama Work’:

The book is not an exhaustive guide to the practical study of theatre; rather it identifies varieties of form that might be used or experienced as part of the more comprehensive art-

process of communicating and interpreting meanings through theatre (1991, p. 3).

I believe that the careful selection of conventions should contribute to a well-structured, dramatic experience. Theatre form is valued through the use of the conventions and this encourages the arts perspective to become part of the learning. However, Owens and Barber (1997) emphasise that there has to be an understanding of how the conventions function and their particular contribution to dramatic form overall. Without that understanding there is a danger that they present a meaningless list of theatrical approaches that could be used randomly. Were this to happen, dramatic conventions could become a “piecemeal and disjointed means of creating and using drama”, adding little to the dramatic meaning of a role-play (Carey 1995, p. 32).

I have argued elsewhere (Collier 2000) that Neelands’ grouping of the different dramatic conventions not only provides a means of using dramatic form to develop meaning in drama but could also provide a model for thinking about how participants engage in dramatic action. Dramatic conventions determine the dramatic focus of a scenario and therefore help determine how involved or detached participants will be in a role-play.

The context-building and narrative action conventions are structured to involve the participants in the dramatic process and encourage them to identify with the situation, characters and action of the scenario being developed. Context-building action does this through fleshing out details of character and situation, whilst narrative action invites involvement through building up the story, using aspects such as tension and suspense to ‘hook’ participants into the drama. These

conventions take advantage of the naturalistic elements of dramatic form, which allows it to replicate 'real life' situations.

The symbolic and reflective action conventions do the opposite. They are designed to move participants out of the drama. This is achieved by making participants more aware of the artifice of the dramatic form. In symbolic action this is achieved by focusing on the representational aspects of dramatic form—its non-naturalistic elements such as symbol and metaphor. In reflective action, the dramatic momentum—the feeling that fictional characters are operating in 'real-time'—is slowed down or suspended to allow space for reflection. Once again the artificial or representational nature of dramatic form is brought to the foreground, reminding participants that they are part of a learning process that involves both being in and out of the action.

The role-play scenario that follows is one I devised and facilitated. It was intended to demonstrate how an appreciation of Neelands' dramatic conventions and groupings could promote a balance between engagement and detachment for participants in the drama. This balancing of the engaging or realistic elements of drama against its alienating, non-naturalistic aspects, encourages the development of metaxis—the place where the worlds of the 'real' and the fictional meet and provide the stimulus for aesthetic learning.

The starting point for the role-play was a short newspaper article I devised entitled 'Yuppies Go Home' (Appendix 3). It was designed to raise issues about how different parties may view the same situation, and also examine if stereotyping was an issue that affected the arguments taking place. These are only two of the possible issues I thought may emerge. Many others have come from participants when

they engaged in the learning situation. The article was devised for working with adults in a time frame of 1½ to 2 hours.

All the conventions included in the role-play scenario outlined here are drawn from 'Structuring Drama Work' (Neelands 1991). A brief description of every convention is provided but it is necessary to refer to Appendix 2 or the book for a more comprehensive description of each one. I am only focussing on the use of a few conventions from the forty-seven on offer. However, I do use all of the four dramatic convention action groupings described above, so as to develop dramatic form in a consciously balanced manner. Conventions that I judge as being least threatening are employed at the start of the role-play, with ones that are more challenging at the end. The level of threat is usually linked to the level of participation that is required from the students.

The concept of 'metaxis' informs the way the dramatic conventions from the four action groupings are utilised within the role-play. This means that opportunities are created for participants to move in and out of the drama so they are not only dramatically involved but also critically aware. The idea behind this is to avoid participants getting 'lost' in the drama, for if they did so they might begin to confuse the fiction of the role-play with their everyday reality. As pointed out in Chapter 3, this can be a disorientating and emotionally uncomfortable experience for some people. Alternatively, the strategic use of dramatic conventions can encourage reluctant participants to become more engaged in the fiction of the role-play scenario.

'Yuppies Go Home' – the use of dramatic conventions in role-play

Participants were given the newspaper article 'Yuppies Go Home' to read, then they talked about their first impressions of it and the issues it raised.

The group then explored the article further using a variety of different interactive strategies. The first convention employed was 'collective drawing', which comes under the context-building action grouping. At this point, I wanted participants to get interested and involved in the drama, so I used conventions designed to do this.

Collective drawing requires participants to make "a collective image to represent a place or people in the drama" (Collier 2000, p. 14). In this situation I asked the group to split into smaller groups of about four people and on large sheets of paper draw the graffiti that would be found on the walls of houses around Darlinghurst, an inner-city suburb of metropolitan Sydney. We then put the graffiti paper on the walls and commented on the impression it made and the points it raised. The graffiti also provided background scenery for the role-play. Further, it signalled that a space had been created where the dramatic action could take place.

Participants stayed in the same groups when still image and caption-making conventions were used to develop the context of the drama further. Still image requires participants to use "their own bodies to crystallize a moment, idea or a theme" (Neelands 1991, p. 19). They create a physical still picture—a frozen moment of drama. Caption-making is about devising "slogans, chapter headings of what is being presented visually" (Neelands 1991, p. 44).

Still image is part of the context-building action grouping, as it gets participants to literally build up a picture of the situation as they see it. Caption-making, however, is about distilling the experience and finding the essence of the drama. It comes under the poetic action grouping, because this is concerned with moving the action onto a symbolic level that stresses the artificial nature of dramatic form. Caption-making allows the drama to be slowed down and gives space for looking at it as an audience might, from the outside. It also encourages a move from focusing on contextual detail to finding the essence of a situation – its key motif.

Participants in this example were asked to create the picture (using their bodies and any props at hand) that might accompany the newspaper article that they had just read (still image) and the headline that might accompany it (caption-making). Participants looked at the different pictures and headlines that the group had created and ‘read’ them, commenting on the meaning they had for the different observers. The group devising the pictures and headlines also had the chance to add their perceptions. At this stage the drama, and the issues raised within it, became a great deal more complex and detailed.

Then participants returned to their still pictures, and two more conventions – overheard conversations and thought tracking – were introduced. The first convention involved ‘eavesdropping’ on snippets of conversation. The roles represented in the still pictures – such as ‘resident’ and ‘yuppie’ – communicated a short piece of conversation that may have been going on in the scene to the rest of the group. The second convention asked participants to talk their thoughts out loud – to verbalise what was going on in their heads at that time. This could differ considerably from what they had been saying!

The overheard conversations convention is part of the narrative action grouping as it helps drive the story along and lets us know more about what is happening. Thought tracking comes under the reflective action grouping, as it highlights the thinking process that goes on behind the dialogue and the action. Once again this can add extra depth to participants' understanding of the different issues under debate.

At this point in the activity participants were given the opportunity to develop their understanding of the situation of some of the key people in the newspaper article through the 'role-on-the wall' convention. An outline of a figure was drawn up on some butcher's paper, put up on the wall, and identified as being one of the roles under investigation (for example a 'yuppie' newcomer). Each participant was given a few 'post-it' stickers and was asked to put on these any qualities or characteristics they had noticed about this role from their involvement in the previous activities. They allocated one quality/characteristic per 'post-it', then placed them in and around the figure. These were then used as a basis for discussion. They brought into the open peoples' different perceptions of the role. It also allowed the group to discuss issues of stereotyping.

The role-on-the-wall was left up and referred to regularly as the role-play activities progressed. 'Post-its' were added or subtracted from the drawing as more information was gleaned from the drama. This strategy comes under the narrative action grouping as it provides information on different people in the role-play, which adds to the story. It also seems to have a reflective function as participants are not in role but are observing critically from the outside.

After this, participants worked in pairs. One in each pair took on the role of a newcomer or long-term resident, and the other a journalist from a newspaper looking to further investigate the initial story. They engaged in an 'interview' (narrative action) convention, and then reversed roles so they got a different perspective of the role they had just played. 'Role-reversal' is categorised as a poetic action convention because it heightens the artificial, contrived nature of drama and allows participants to gain a different perspective of a role, and possibly empathise with another's viewpoint.

At this stage, I had used all four of the dramatic conventions action groupings. The emphasis to begin with had been on building up the context in detail—to encourage students to gradually participate, become involved in the drama and identify with the people and the situation. I then included strategies from the other conventions in order to develop the symbolic and reflective elements of the drama. This strategy offers participants the chance to slow down the drama, and become aware of its form and the meanings that can be derived from this dramatic approach.

To this point it may appear that I have not yet involved participants in any role-play activity. If, however, we define role-play as responding 'as if' we were particular people in a particular situation (Heathcote 1984), then I would argue that every single strategy employed in the example above has been a form of role-play. When participants drew the graffiti on the paper, they were responding 'as if' they were disgruntled Darlington residents. Creating the still pictures involved them identifying 'as if' they were the people in the story, or identifying at another level 'as if' they were the photo-journalist who took the picture for inclusion in a newspaper.

The concept of responding 'as if' in a role-play allows for different physical and mental levels of involvement in any given situation. It relates also to Heathcote (1984) and Carroll's (1986) concept of role-distance that has been described earlier in this chapter. In this scenario I purposefully chose to operate at the most distance end of their role-distance continuum in order to help participants feel more comfortable moving into the drama being created.

The situation eventually developed into a full group role-play where participants took on the roles of the different people involved in the newspaper article—those mentioned in it and those who were not given a voice but were still affected. The scenario created was a TV discussion programme called 'Open Forum', where parties with differing views were brought together in a TV studio before a studio audience ('meetings'—narrative action convention). I adopted the role ('teacher-in-role'—narrative action convention) of the program interviewer and lead the discussion. Commercial breaks provided 'time out' for participants and offered space to reflect on what they were learning.

Throughout the role-play session described above, I consciously used the dramatic conventions to develop the drama and draw participants into the newspaper scenario. The conventions were also employed to encourage frequent reflection during the dramatic action, rather than after the role-play had concluded, which is when this usually occurs. Although it may seem that through using the conventions the facilitator strongly controls the learning situation, as Mather (1996) points out, over time participants would become familiar with the different drama conventions available, they could determine what approach should be used, and when and why. Then they would be able to consciously

manipulate dramatic form in order to develop their learning according to their particular needs.

Each different convention requires a different kind of dramatic focus. Some call for a critical, distanced focus whilst others fully engage participants in the performance of the drama. The manipulation of form and focus not only highlights the dramatic nature of role-play but can counter the problem of participants becoming so involved in role-play activities that they are unable to be critically aware of what they are learning. The manipulation of form can also be used to engage those participants who have difficulties involving themselves in fictional events of the role-play.

I believe that Neelands' dramatic conventions and action groupings could help participants and facilitators to appreciate role-play's inherent dramatic form and discover how this can be utilised in a learning context. It must be remembered, however, that Neelands' model provides only one perspective on the use of dramatic conventions in learning. Other writers interpret the conventions somewhat differently. This may raise problems for how they can be used consistently as a tool for arts education.

Carey (1995), Mather (1996) and Owens and Barber (1997) use the Neelands' model as their basis for developing their versions of dramatic conventions. Carey's 'Quick Reference Guide to Drama Conventions' (1995) presents a version that is most similar to Neelands'. Carey differs, however, in the number of conventions identified and the way the groupings are nominated. Fewer conventions are given but more detail is provided on the dramatic functions of the four groupings, which are called 'phases' in this model.

Carey's phase one is still concerned with 'building the context', but also its function 'getting them interested' (1995, p. 29) is included as part of this categorisation. His phase two is concerned with 'building the narrative', but also with 'deepening commitment' (1995, p. 30). Phase three differs most markedly from the Neelands' model. The previous emphasis on developing the symbolic elements of the drama has been changed to 'introducing the problem'; 'testing commitment and getting engagement' (1995, p. 31). Phase four involves 'reflection and reviewing', and has the function of 'relating fiction to reality' (1995, p. 31). The shift from a symbolic to a problem-solving focus aligns Carey's model now more closely with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle than to a theatre arts approach.

The Owens and Barber model (1997) lists a similar number of conventions to Neelands but reduces the categories of groupings from four to two. These become 'making' and 'reflecting and evaluating' (1997, p. 22 & 28). Making covers everything that engages participants in the drama – anything that is concerned with 'hooking interest', while reflecting and evaluating is concerned with critical disengagement from the dramatic action.

Mather's (1996) final categorisation of dramatic conventions seems the most complex. It embodies one hundred and two conventions that are organised into seven different groupings. These, however, are chiefly descriptive in nature and do not indicate how the conventions function dramatically as clearly as the other models examined so far. The seven descriptive categories used to group the conventions are: outspoke, inspoke, still image, tele/video, mood creating, sound/movement and written. It does not serve my argument here to explain what each of

these categories represent. It is sufficient to emphasise that they follow descriptive rather than analytical groupings.

The different way Neelands' (1991) dramatic conventions are listed by other drama practitioners is not problematic in itself, but the logic behind how they are grouped or categorised presents some challenges. The Carey (1995), Mather (1996) and Owen and Barber (1997) models try to simplify Neelands' four action groupings because they "include some difficult concepts couched in sophisticated language" (Mather 1997, p. 37). However, by doing this, the theatre element is necessarily 'watered down' and the potential for role-play to be a theatre arts strategy is subsequently reduced. The alternative categorisations do provide some extra information on the dramatic functions of the different conventions' groupings, and also on how these can be used to engage or distance participants from the dramatic action. The resultant cost is however a simplification of theatre's significant form.

It is also confusing when the same conventions are given different functions through the way they are grouped. For example 'hot seating' is categorised as a narrative-building action convention by Neelands and as a convention for building the context by Carey. 'Collective drawing' is a context-building action convention for Neelands but a reflecting and evaluating convention for Owens and Barber.

If we look at any of the nominated conventions it becomes clear that there is a disturbing slippage between the way the conventions are categorised. For example, still pictures for Neelands is a context-building action convention, as it can set the scene of the drama by providing a visual cue. It can also be seen as a narrative-building action convention because 'every picture tells a story'. At the same time it

could be categorised as a poetic or reflective action convention because a still picture is a distillation of an event, and also because it is a frozen moment in time, asking to be read or reflected upon.

Most of the conventions could be placed in different categories according to the learning aim of the facilitator or the group using them. We can see from the 'Yuppies Go Home' example that conventions can be useful when used in this way. However, the dramatic convention frameworks provided by Neelands, Carey, Mather and Owen and Barker do not provide a unifying conceptual framework that could help practitioners make sense of how to use them to their full dramatic capacity.

Dramatic conventions are valuable because they lead to an appreciation of the different forms of theatre, and the different genres available for use in role-play. They provide a language for discussing theatre form and a reference point for deciding how dramatic focus can be manipulated to influence participant involvement in a role-play. However, because dramatic conventions are theoretically inconsistent they do not offer a complete model for role-play practice. They provide a palette of colourful dramatic forms for playful experimentation, but offer only a limited explanation of the techniques needed to create a work of art.

4. Bolton's model of role-play and dramatic timing

Bolton (2000) argued that even the simplest kind of role-play—for example, a job interview—was potentially dramatic and therefore capable of being a piece of theatre. He explored the proposition that

role-play can be an art form and a learning tool in his book entitled, 'So You Want To Use Role-play?' (1999). This is an unusual drama-in-education text because it not only focuses on role-play as a learning strategy for children, but considers its use in adult training as well. I will examine some of the ideas proposed in Bolton's book to see if they can offer insights into how role-play could be utilised as a theatre arts learning strategy.

Bolton attempts to answer the crucial question: 'Are there detectable pathways along which one always goes in selecting a role-play for one's class?' (1999, p. 57). It is the question that the dramatic conventions models failed to answer. He replies that there is a theoretical framework that can provide a consistent approach to role-play practice whether it is used in the primary school or with adults. The one selection criterion Bolton sees "as indispensable to and absolutely integral to the nature of role-play when it is to be used in a learning context" (1999, p. 57) is that all groups, whether they are children or adults, have to move into an 'as if' fiction. This is the key criterion that all sub-criteria support. Participants in a role-play are not only receiving knowledge but making it their own, and this, Bolton suggests, "calls on one's humanness in a way not normally associated with an instructional context" (1999, p. 58).

This human element is one of the strengths of role-play as a learning strategy. When participants engage in a world of fiction and respond 'as if' they were themselves or somebody else in a different situation, they capitalise on their personal and social experience in a way that rarely happens in other less holistic learning approaches. It is this particular characteristic of role-play, however, that contains its weakness as a learning approach. Moving into a world of fiction

requires an imaginative leap that is not usually required of participants in most learning situations. Role-play, as a medium for learning, is therefore “potentially an opportunity and a hazard” (Bolton 1999, p. 58).

Bolton argues that every decision made about selecting an appropriate role-play approach for a group of learners must be based on the key criterion of striking a balance between challenge and protection:

If you over-protect, they will not learn; if you under-protect they will not learn (1999, p. 58).

The focus then, is on the skill and judgement of the facilitators. They have to determine what the ‘givens’ of the learning situation will be and plan a role-play that is appropriate for the particular learning group and context. Facilitators are also responsible for determining the kind of reflection that needs to take place both during and after the role-play activity. In terms of planning, these factors divide simply into judgements made before the role-play, the choice of role-play, and the follow-up. Most importantly, during these two phases facilitators have to consider how to achieve the right balance between challenge and protection before, during and after the role-play.

The judgements made before the role-play proceeds are those that relate to the topic to be learned, the space available and the time allowed for the learning to take place. That also includes the background of the participants, their cultural perceptions and their interests. These ‘givens’ will influence the kind of role-play the facilitator chooses to develop, and helps ensure that it is accessible for participants as well as engaging them.

The final choice of role-play will be influenced by the responsibility the facilitator decides to give participants and the level of choice that is offered. This will manifest itself in terms of the roles allocated, the way they are 'framed' within an event and how this affects participants' perceptual distance from it. In addition the facilitator will have to make choices about the theatre form or dramatic convention to be used, including the kind of dramatic time that will be employed. Finally the facilitator will determine how to follow-up the role-play with activities to consolidate the reflection that has already occurred through self-spectatorship during the role-play.

I believe Bolton's framework for planning and using role-play as a learning strategy to be the most comprehensive model that I have examined so far. It not only provides a structure for planning role-play sessions, but by including theatre form as part of that process it allows for the development of role-play as arts learning strategy. Bolton also explores ideas of challenge and protection, and these seem to relate to the concepts of personal engagement and distance that I have already identified as problematic areas.

Marking dramatic time in role-play

Of particular interest is Bolton's description of how dramatic time can be used in role-play as part of the process of valuing theatre form. He identifies six kinds of dramatic time and explores the apparent safety or danger of using each in some detail (Bolton 1999, p. 66-68). I will focus on a few examples to show how they function as a part of theatre form.

The category of time nominated as 'the past recalled as narrative' refers to 'straightforward narration' – the recounting of something that has happened in the past (Bolton 1999, p. 66). Because the experience is set in the past it is by its very nature distanced from the actual event that took place. It can therefore provide the narrator with some psychic space and remove some of the immediacy of the situation being recalled.

In contrast, the use of 'now time' produces the opposite effect. This refers to the feeling by the participants in the fiction that 'it is happening now'. Even though the impression may be given of drama occurring in 'real time', that can never really be the case because "there is an underlying artificiality of 'making a scene' which by definition distorts time" (Bolton 1999, p. 67). Bolton suggests that sustaining this artificiality requires some degree of technique – that can be daunting for those who are inexperienced in drama. It may be that participants lacking the necessary technique may be unable to discriminate between 'now time' and 'reality'. If so, it could provide a rationale for some of the problems that arise in role-play during simulations.

Bolton's advice is to avoid working in 'now time' until the group feels more confident working within the confines of dramatic form. He suggests instead that the facilitator should take responsibility for adopting a role and 'carry the burden of technique' of operating in 'now time'. This way the class can gradually "feel that it is indeed 'happening now'" (1999, p. 67).

There are other variations of dramatic time that mix past and present. An example of this can be found in the category of 'present actions mixed with asides in the past tense'. This requires participants to

simultaneously describe what happened in the past tense to the audience and then enact the situation to each other as if it was happening now. For example, in an interview situation an interviewer would say the following to the audience:

“I asked the first candidate to come in and sit down.”

She would then go to the candidate and say to them directly:

“Please, sit down Ms Sheppard.”

This mixing of past and present dramatic time frames helps participants understand the difference between the two and gradually make the imaginative leap into the ‘as if’ world of dramatic fiction.

Bolton’s description of the way dramatic time functions as part of theatre form in role-play is illuminating. It is possible now to see that dramatic time can be used as a way of determining how involved or distanced participants are from a dramatic event. If a role-play requires me to describe or narrate to a friend what happened to me in an interview situation, it has a different dynamic from a role-play that requires my actual participation in the ‘now time’ of the interview itself. Narration allows for more critical reflection of what occurred.

The framework that Bolton (1999) has developed for the facilitation of role-play is useful in many ways. It provides guidelines for planning role-play activities, and identifies the different factors that impact on its effectiveness as a learning approach. Bolton’s understanding of the role of dramatic time and the stress he places on protection and challenge provide new insights into how role-play can be managed. However, the

Bolton model of role-play practice also has some flaws. The two that concern me most are the complexity of his model, and its facilitator-centred approach to developing role-play.

Having previously criticised Barber and Owen (1997) for oversimplifying the dramatic conventions model and diluting its theatre arts aspect, I am now criticising Bolton's model for being too complex. Whilst the range of examples of practice that Bolton provides, and the theory that supports them, are impressive, they are also daunting for those who may be less experienced in using drama as a learning approach. In fact I find them daunting despite having extensive experience in this field.

One of the reasons that Bolton's approach feels so challenging is the responsibility that the facilitator has for making the role-play a success. She is expected to operate on too many different levels simultaneously. The facilitator has not only to decide what role-play will be appropriate for the particular group and context they are working with, but also what form the role-play should take. At the same time she is considering how to challenge and protect the participants, and she may even be taking on a role herself to help adjust the group to accepting and understanding what is required of the 'now time' of dramatic fiction. The facilitator has also to look for opportunities for developing 'self-spectatorship' within the drama, as well as finding appropriate ways of consolidating learning through reflection at the end of the role-play.

There is a danger with this model that only the most confident facilitators with drama backgrounds will attempt to use role-play as a

learning approach, whilst the majority will place it in the 'too hard basket' and leave it alone.

The level of facilitator control that Bolton suggests is also problematic for adult educators. He describes the key element that the trainer has to keep in mind when developing a role-play:

All groups have to step into an 'as if' fiction, but it is a fiction conceived of by a tutor/teacher/leader or trainer in terms of *learning*. In other words what it is in respect of the two-fold fiction and learning outcome starts in *your* head—and *they* have to embrace it (Bolton 1999, p. 57).

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, two of the key principles of adult education are encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning, and defining educational goals that are appropriate for their needs (Knowles 1990; Candy, Crebert et al. 1994). Bolton's model does not appear to offer much space for this kind of development because the facilitator of the role-play is the one who seems to determine what is learnt and how it is learnt. At the same time he or she creates a situation where participants are under the illusion that the learning is theirs, because of their involvement in the making of the drama. This seems a rather manipulative approach on the part of the facilitator. Bolton notes that:

...requiring your students to role-play is uniquely challenging, for the 'embracing of knowledge' is not a matter of instruction or absorption: it is to be achieved by entering the fiction in a way that makes required knowledge their own (1999, p. 57).

Whilst acknowledging that Bolton's approach to role-play has value, I do not believe it provides a suitable model for adult education practice, chiefly because it lacks a student-centred focus. Its emphasis on tutor-led learning appears to be at odds with adult learning philosophies. It also puts a great deal of pressure on the facilitator to perform successfully in a complex field, which can be daunting. The final model of practice I shall be examining is less tutor-dependent, and provides a forum for participants to voice their needs and concerns within a theatrical framework.

5. Forum theatre, dramatic symbols and dramatic tension

In this last section I will consider what practical insights forum theatre can offer into role-play as an arts learning strategy in adult education. Forum theatre was devised as an educational tool, but one that was chiefly concerned with political education. It has, however, many features that recommend it as a model for role-play practice in adult education, especially when it is considered in relation to the other models I have explored.

Firstly, it uses the participants' experience as the starting point for the drama. This was identified as one of the main of the weaknesses of Bolton's model. Unlike playback theatre, it does not depend on trained actors for its success, and anyone who wants to participate can do so. Secondly, like Neelands' model, forum theatre form relies on a range of dramatic conventions for its basis, but it also provides a clear theoretical framework for how these conventions should be used to maximise learning potential. It capitalises on theatre form as a means of

learning, and one of its key aims is the development of a state of metaxis for participants.

Although the model has complexity, it is simple enough for most facilitators to comprehend. It therefore has the potential to utilise the strengths of theatre form, but in a manner that values and empowers the participants in the drama.

The background to forum theatre

The Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal developed forum theatre in the late 1960's. It represents a dramatic form where "the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act" (1993, p. 126). Boal believed that theatre could be a revolutionary tool. Forum theatre was designed to help the oppressed people of South America find a collective voice through the use of theatrical form. It was devised as a means of empowerment through the practice of actions that might lead to a possibility of change.

Forum theatre was deliberately designed as an educational process—participants should have learnt something at the end of the performance and not just have been entertained by it. Boal's theatre is not intended to be "didactic in the in the old sense of the word and style, but pedagogic, in the sense of collective learning" (Boal 1995, p. 7). Jackson reinforces this point and emphasises how forum theatre is essentially educational:

It is never didactic to its audience, it involves a process of learning together rather than one way teaching; it assumes

that there is as much likelihood of the audience knowing the answers as the performers (Translator's introduction to Boal 1992, p. xxi).

Boal (1979) believed that traditional bourgeois theatre—based on the ideas of Aristotle—has disempowered its audiences by making them passive observers of drama. He notes as Dewey (1934) did in 'Art as Experience' that people are no longer the active participants they originally were when theatre was integrated into social rituals performed by and for the people. Boal sees the separation between audience and the actors as problematic. This is because the actors are in control of the performance, whilst the audience is encouraged to identify with the protagonists (heroes) on stage and live vicariously through their actions. This identification is necessary so that the audience can relate to the main character's fatal flaw, for example Othello's jealousy, and recognise it as their own. This is intended to invoke pity and fear in the audience, who see the downfall of the protagonist and realise a similar fate awaits them if they do not conform to the norms of society.

This experience which Aristotle terms 'catharsis' is, according to Boal, in effect "the purgation of all anti-social elements" (1993, p. 46). It is 'bourgeois theatre' and aligned to Brook's (1986) description of 'deadly theatre'. This kind of theatre does not stimulate its audience to be critically aware of the social and political forces that help shape their lives.

Forum theatre has been designed to break down the artificial barriers created by the bourgeois theatre form. Most importantly "the barrier between actors and spectators is destroyed: all must act, all must be

protagonists in the necessary transformation of society” (Boal 1993, foreword). Forum theatre provides a space where participants can explore issues by acting them out and analysing the social and political impact that these incidents have on their lives.

It could be argued that Boal’s focus on theatre as a revolutionary tool for South American peasants is not an appropriate model for the facilitation of role-play in adult education. However, I believe his view of a theatre where actors and audience participate fully in the dramatic action is relevant because it focuses on the experience of the participants and allows them to determine the content of the drama and how it should be developed. Most importantly, Boal’s interest in theatre as an educational tool aligns forum theatre to role-play.

The concept of metaxis is important to Boal. He renames participants who take part in his dramatic events ‘spect-actors’. This term is used to stress the dual nature of the performance process: it is to do with action but also with watching action and being critically aware at the same time:

Theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself; when it discovers that, in this act of seeing, it can see *itself*—see itself *in situ*: see itself seeing (Boal 1995, p. 13).

It is the strategies that Boal uses to promote critical learning through theatrical form that I believe have most potential for developing role-play as an arts learning strategy. By critical learning I am referring to the kind of reflective learning proposed by Mezirow (1990) and

Brookfield (1995) which were looked at in Chapter 4 and will be returned to in more detail later in Chapter 8.

The structure of forum theatre

Boal has a strong sense of how theatre operates as an art form and he uses this form to develop critical awareness. Like Fox he notes the importance of establishing the space where the drama is going to take place. The kind of space designated is not important. Nevertheless the recognition that 'here' is 'the stage', and the rest of the room—or the rest of whatever space is being used—is 'the auditorium', a smaller space within a larger space, is crucial to the development of aesthetic concentration. According to Boal, it is the interpenetration of these two spaces that creates the aesthetic space, a space that draws attention to itself because it is the focus of an audience's gaze and "attracts centripetally, like a black hole" (1995, pp. 18-19).

The Boal model of learning is more theatre-focused than that of Bolton and Neelands. Although Boal has a radical vision of what theatre should be, he still uses traditional theatre terminology to describe his new approach. He sees the audience as being crucial to the dynamics of aesthetic space and a vital element of forum theatre as a whole. They are not a traditional passive audience, but one that actively watches what is happening on stage in the knowledge that they can intervene and enter the action at an appropriate moment.

Boal also stresses the importance of the visual in his form of theatre. One of the reasons he does this is to cater for the needs of illiterate peasants. These people often had a stronger confidence in their physical

rather than their verbal powers of expression. Like Fox with Play playback theatre back Theatre, Boal realises how powerful the pictorial can be in dramatic terms, and so he utilises the physical environment and human non-verbal communication to convey a message:

We can begin by stating that the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement. Therefore, to control the means of theatrical production, man [sic] must, first of all, control his own body, know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive (1993, p. 125).

The body is the starting point for forum theatre. Participants in small groups are asked to create frozen images of an event that has particular significance for them in terms of demonstrating an unresolved “social or political error” (1992, p. 18). These physical images are refined to a point where they communicate in as simple and clear a way as possible, the essence of the problem they have identified. Although the facilitator suggests a learning focus, it is the participants who choose and decide how to interpret the experience they wish to represent. They determine how the images should be presented – but are given feedback from, and are influenced by, other participants, who look at the frozen pictures and suggest what meaning they hold for an audience. Participants read the frozen images as if they were reading a picture. If the pictures cannot be read clearly then the group readjusts the image until the message is clear.

Members of the participating audience may be asked to put their hand on the shoulder of the person represented in the frozen scene who appears to be the most oppressed. This helps those creating the scene to

see if they have the correct dramatic focus. It also encourages them to pare the dramatic situation down to the key elements that are crucial for understanding what is happening in the drama. Once the scene showing the problem has been fully crafted, participants are asked to devise two more frozen scenes. In these scenes participants are asked to represent what happened before and after the scene that has been shown. Words and movements are added sparingly to the images, until the scene emerges in a form that has little or no excess elements in it to detract from the unresolved problem that is at the heart of the learning.

Creating drama through physical images relates to Neelands' (1991) still pictures dramatic convention. It is a convention that is meant to build up the context of a dramatic situation, and although it is possible to use this convention for other purposes, it seems as if Boal's intention is to gradually build up the drama in a non-threatening manner. Flemming notes however, that strategies such as 'freeze-frame' or 'tableaux' are techniques which also "provide focus and slow the drama down—they halt the onward rush of story line in order to promote reflection, engagement and serious attention to the consequences of actions" (1995, p. 3).

The participants' ability to manipulate and read the images they have created is fundamental to forum theatre. By putting the emphasis on the visual, on picture making, Boal is highlighting how drama frames everyday situations and gives them a focus and particularity they normally would not have. When participants are asked to respond to the feedback from those who are reading the picture, and refine their images until they communicate the problem in as simple and clear way as possible, they are being encouraged to look for the symbolic in the

action. For example, a handshake can symbolise capitulation. The turned back can speak of rebellion.

In addition, participants are introduced to the concept of dramatic time. Through an examination of the past, present, and future scenarios, they can see how time can be manipulated in theatre—providing insights that would be impossible to achieve in real life. The use of Still Image introduces participants to the subtleties of theatre form and sets up situations for contemplation and comment.

Then the 'game' of forum theatre really begins. The aim of this exercise is to challenge the 'vision of the world' presented by the performers. This happens when a member of the audience intervenes in the action and offers a different vision—another possibility of what could have happened—to challenge the moment of oppression that has been portrayed. The audience member takes over the part of the relevant actor in the piece and re-plays the scene with the changes she envisages. The actor who has been replaced does not retire immediately but "stays on the sidelines as a kind of coach or supporter, to encourage the spect-actors and correct them if they go wrong" (1992, p. 20). Other spect-actors can then offer different suggestions and try to find a solution to the problem. Alternatives are practised in action and then discussed. It is this connection between doing and critiquing that lies at the heart of the forum theatre learning process.

The problems depicted in forum theatre may or may not be resolved, but the exercise is designed to reveal the complexities inherent in any situation and shows that there are many ways of approaching or thinking about them. Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz suggest that forum

theatre should generate “a dialog about the oppression, an examination of alternatives, and a ‘rehearsal’ for real situations” (1994, p. 237).

Overseeing the action is the ‘Joker’, who is “the director/master of ceremonies” (Schutzman et al. 1994, p. 237). She is responsible for ensuring that the forum theatre process and its specific rituals are adhered to, just as the conductor does in playback theatre. The Joker’s role is also to provide a pragmatic ‘sounding board’ for the suggested solutions that the group proposes in forum theatre, and to check that they are not using ‘the rules of magik’ to solve problems. This refers to solutions that are impractical and unrealistic—for example, if a group of participants exploring problems they are having with their managers at work decide they are going to win the lottery and never work again!

The Joker, by carefully valuing forum theatre’s particular form, subtly directs the learning that takes place. It is the participants, however, who have the power to act and change the dramatic situation as they see fit and create meanings that are pertinent to their context and needs. As Boal observes:

In forum theater no idea is imposed: the audience, the people, have the opportunity to try out all their ideas, to rehearse all possibilities, and to verify them in practice, that is in theatrical practice...It is not the place of theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined (1993, p. 141)

I believe forum theatre provides a valuable model for role-play practice in adult education. It introduces participants to the key elements of theatre form, but in a way that is less likely to intimidate either

participants or facilitators—who may be unused to working in this way. It allows participants a great deal of autonomy by letting them decide what scenarios should be explored. It also encourages them to engage in problem-solving and deal with issues that arise in the drama so that they determine what is learned through this process. Forum theatre does this in a manner that both challenges and protects the participants, by finding a balance between how engaged or detached they are from the drama.

How theatre form is used to engage and detach participants in forum theatre

Those participating in forum theatre are drawn into the drama because they choose the topic to be explored. Unlike Bolton's model, the facilitator does not have to find ways of hooking participants into the drama—because it is already relevant to them, as it reflects their life experience.

This could be seen as dangerous, since the participants could relate so closely to the topic under consideration that they may be unable to separate fiction from reality. Boal uses theatre form to counter this. He avoids using 'now time'—which is the most difficult dramatic time to operate in, as it so closely resembles that of real life. Instead he utilises the still picture convention that freezes the action and stresses the artifice of theatre form and past and future time modes. The movement into 'now time' is very gradual and, because the emphasis is on only including elements essential to communicating meaning, the symbolic aspect of theatre is stressed and acts as a distancing device.

Another of the key elements of theatre that Boal uses in forum theatre is the suspension of form. This creates a sense of dramatic tension, as time after time the drama is stopped and replayed but not completed. Instead it is presented again and again, allowing a further exploration of its form and meaning to take place. Boal claims that:

In theatre any break stimulates (1993, p. 170).

It forces the participant to momentarily move out of the drama and look at it from the outside as an audience does. This helps the participants sustain a psychic distance from the event and encourages reflection.

The suspension of form plays a part in building up the tension and drama and involves participants and the audience in the action. This is countered by breaks in the action, which act as a distancing device.

In forum theatre Boal manipulates form in a way that both engages and distances participants from the scenario being explored. He does this for a purpose, which is to engage participants in critical learning. It is only when there is a balance between engagement and detachment in drama that there will be an understanding of how the worlds of fiction and reality operate. Once that has been achieved, then metaxis can take place and participants can experience their capacity to observe themselves in action. For, as Boal suggests:

This possibility of being simultaneously Protagonist and principal spectator of our actions, affords us the further possibility of thinking virtualities, of imagining possibilities; of combining memory and imagination—two indissociable

psychic processes—to reinvent the past and to invent the future (1998, p. 7)

Forum theatre provides a model of learning that empowers participants to create their visions of what the world *could* be rather than what it now is. This is done in a critical, pragmatic way that does not allow participants to wallow in empty idealism. Boal consciously uses a range of theatre forms to help participants achieve this learning goal. The way these forms are utilised helps them understand the particular nature of theatre, but this happens in a gradual manner that is less likely to intimidate than other models examined above. Forum theatre therefore provides a model for role-play in adult education that allows it to be true to its theatre arts heritage. It also presents a clear framework for practice so that there is an educational rationale for the dramatic conventions it employs.

If we suppose that the initial question asked of participants were to be altered slightly—so that they consider an injustice that has occurred or a problem that has arisen rather than a moment of oppression—it becomes possible to see how forum theatre can provide a transferable framework for role-play practice. Role-play has the ability to highlight issues of status in the social roles that are adopted by participants in a scenario. This means that the examination of power relations can still remain at the forefront of learning in a role-play event even if there is a shift in focus from oppression to problematic scenarios.

Forum theatre in practice

The following is a negotiation scenario that illustrates how the forum theatre approach can be used in an adult educational context. Participants work in small groups creating scenarios they have chosen as being relevant to them. Each shows a problem or an injustice that they have experienced in this area. They refine these through the use of the Still Picture approach. One group may present a situation which shows a worker who has had to negotiate an enterprise agreement for the first time with her manager. The worker is unused to the situation and overwhelmed by having to argue her case. Consequently she passively accepts the first pay offer and acquiesces to the conditions put forward by the manager.

After the scene has been shown to the rest of the group, the Joker asks if they can see other ways that the scenario could have been played out, which would empower the worker and counter the problem or injustice that has been presented. A member of the group puts up her hand and offers to take over the part of the worker.

The scene is replayed but this time the new player acts assertively, getting the manager to make a couple of compromises in terms of work conditions, but not shifting on pay levels. The group discusses what has taken place, sometimes questioning the role-players in their roles as managers or workers, highlighting the problems that still remain. Another participant comes into the scene as a union representative and puts forward an argument for joining the union and getting the representative to bargain for them collectively. As the alternatives are presented, the group uses the practice and discussion to critique the situation. Ideas are expressed in both action and words.

Finding a model for role-play

In this chapter I have examined a range of different theatre and drama-in-education models in order to fashion an acceptable theatre arts framework for role-play practice in adult education. I have argued that forum theatre presents the most complete model of practice. That is because it combines the strengths of offering student autonomy, but in a clearly defined and useable theatre arts form. This theatre arts form also provides a clear framework for the facilitator and helps guide their practice as well as that of the participants. Forum theatre also appears to offer a solution to the problem of how to balance the elements of engagement and detachment of participants in a role-play, which I identified as one of the key issues of this thesis.

The only problem with this model is that it could be seen as repetitive and therefore limited. This is because forum theatre, like playback theatre, has a clearly definable and highly ritualised form. The patterning and repetition that create this ritual combine to have a positive effect because they help participants recognise where the boundaries exist between dramatic fiction and 'reality'. On the other hand these rituals can also breed predictability.

I believe forum theatre may be a useful model to use initially with participants who are learning to engage with role-play as an arts strategy. It provides a clear framework for practice and an approach that utilises theatre devices that both protect and challenge participants in the drama. It helps familiarise participants with the key elements of theatre's significant form – for example the use of dramatic space, focus, tension, time and symbol. Most importantly it provides participants with the opportunity to actively engage in the dramatic action and

make it their own. Clearly, however, there are elements of the other models that also need to be utilised to add richness and diversity to the forum theatre approach.

Playback theatre provides a model of practice that highlights the power of ritual even more clearly than the forum theatre approach. The conductor in playback theatre uses ritual to differentiate intentional space from everyday space, and to signal how involved or distanced an audience should be from the dramatic action.

Ritual could be used more overtly in role-play practice to highlight its theatre form. The facilitator of a role-play functions as a guide who signals – through ritual – when participants are required to move into a different space for a role-play activity. The facilitator indicates how participants can enter into the imaginative world of responding ‘as if’. This can be achieved through various verbal and non-verbal cues.

Heathcote (1984) and Carroll (1986) provide a useful framework for thinking about role-distance. By referring to this model it is possible to select roles or make participants aware that they can select roles that either involve them closely and emotionally in a dramatic event or distance them from it.

Dramatic conventions can do the same, although the models examined here left it unclear how exactly each convention functioned in terms of structuring the drama and engaging or distancing participants from the role-play scenario (Neelands 1991; Carey 1995; Mather 1996; Owens and Barber 1997). They do however provide an exciting range of dramatic forms that can be used to develop dramatic situations in an interesting and complex way. Different conventions can function dramatically in

different ways according to the learning intentions of the facilitator or participants using them. Most importantly, as Mather (1996) points out, dramatic conventions can provide a language for the discussion of role-play as an art form. Once participants are familiar with this language they can use it to develop the role-play scenario. This ultimately shifts the responsibility for art creation from the facilitator to the participant, allowing them to become more autonomous learners.

Finally, Bolton's (1999) model offers insights into how to structure and plan a role-play session. He introduces the important concepts of protection and challenge in role-play facilitation, and also clearly demonstrates how dramatic time can be used to help participants achieve psychic distance from a dramatic situation or to involve them more fully in the action.

The range of practical strategies offered by the two theatre arts, and three drama-in-education models, examined in this chapter is impressive. They demonstrate how theatre form can be used for learning in ways that protect and challenge participants throughout the dramatic process.

If facilitators and participants are familiar with the different aspects of theatre form, they can use it to involve themselves in the drama and be emotionally engaged in the scenario being explored. This usually means utilising those aspects of theatre form that are aligned to the representation of reality – ones that mirror what we do in everyday life. It is this utilisation of theatre form that makes it possible for participants to feel as though the situation created has credibility, and allows participants to respond emotionally 'as if' that was the case. The more symbolic, less realistic aspects of theatre form can then be used to

detach participants from the drama so they can look at what they have experienced in a more distanced, critical way.

It is this subtle mix of fiction and reality that gives role-play its dramatic power. The interaction of these two elements promotes a state of 'metaxis', and this in turn encourages an aesthetic response. It is the acknowledgment and use of dramatic form that shifts role-play from being an activity focusing on functional behaviour to a theatre arts strategy that promotes aesthetic learning. Pinpointing the exact nature of this aesthetic learning is, however, more problematic.

If the forum theatre process is examined in terms of learning, it can be argued that it helps participants see that there are choices and that change is possible. Boal's intent in forum theatre is to politically educate those who participate by offering them alternative ways of viewing a situation. This encourages them to alter their view of the world. Boal argues that theatre is never "just a simple presentation of what exists: it is becoming and not being" (1993, p. 28). It is the transformative power of theatre that is so relevant to role-play in adult education because art form can promote critical thinking. However, as Boal notes, the arts are not politically neutral. They deal "with all men [sic], with all they do, and all that is done for them: Politics" (1993, p. 11).

This discussion brings to the foreground the question that has been hovering in the shadows of this thesis. What educational intentions should adult educators have in mind when they decide to use role-play as a theatre arts learning strategy? Theatre art offers a different type of educational experience: aesthetic learning. This is due to theatre's significant form, which presents participants with a unique view of the

world. Having studied this significant form and seen how it functions, the learning potential of the arts and the educational intentions of those who use it will need to be examined. This will lead to my final argument, which will aim to justify why role-play as a theatre arts learning strategy needs to be an integral part of the adult education curriculum.

Chapter 8.

The learning benefits of using role-play as an arts strategy

In this chapter I will consider the educational impact of using role-play as a theatre arts strategy in adult education, and how its use influences the possibilities for student learning. I will argue the case for adult educators to use role-play in order to achieve particular educational intentions.

There are four areas of learning that I want to explore here. All of these could be seen as valid learning aims. I will then question whether they are relevant to the possible educational intentions of a facilitator working in adult education.

1. Exploring levels of meaning and content learning
2. Aesthetic learning
3. Therapeutic learning
4. Transformative learning

Meaning and content are closely connected. Content refers to the subject matter of any role-play. For example, if a role-play explored how papers are edited and was set in a newspaper office, the subject content would be media-based. If the role-play investigated the problems faced by early European settlers in Australia, then the content would have a history focus.

The choice of subject content, and the dramatic perspective adopted, can affect the meanings or understandings that participants derive from the drama. I will explore whether role-play can help participants learn content (i.e. historical facts) and also whether it can add complexity to the meanings participants derive from the content explored. As I have identified forum theatre as an appropriate model for introducing role-play as an art form in adult education, this raises the question of whether role-play especially lends itself to political education and consciousness-raising.

Secondly, I will investigate what can be learnt by emphasising the 'significant form' of role-play as a theatre arts process and how this is connected to ideas of "sensuous knowing essential for the life and development of the consciousness" (Abbs, 1987, p. 53). This learning relates to the development of an aesthetic consciousness and is an integral part of the arts experience.

Thirdly, I will question whether role-play as a theatre art form can be used, as Fox (1994) suggests, therapeutically as a personal healing process. If it can, then this implies that role-play has the ability to highlight the affective aspects of learning. We shall see if this is indeed the case.

Finally, I will examine whether the idea that role-play has the potential to encourage transformative learning is valid (Mezirow 1990).

1. Can role-play help participants learn content and add complexity to the meaning that can be derived from that content?

Heathcote (1984) gives examples of how drama can be used to teach content. The Watergate example described in Chapter 4 demonstrates how drama can be employed to examine content—in this case the historical events surrounding the Watergate scandal. In another example she uses the poem ‘Ozymandias’ by Shelley as “evidence of a dig, not yet excavated”, in a drama where the participants are put into roles as archeologists (Heathcote 1984, p. 142). Students have to engage with the poem in depth in order to get the information they need for their archeological dig.

O’Toole and Dunn (2002), and Somers (1995), give examples of drama scenarios that explore social and historical content such as the arrival of the first fleet in Australia or the exploitation of children as chimney sweeps in Victorian England. There appears to be evidence that participants in drama can learn subject content through their engagement in role-play, but how does working in a drama framework alter the way that content is perceived and understood?

Bolton (2000) reminds us that drama is art, and therefore theatre form shapes whatever subject content is being explored. Theatre form influences the way content is viewed and the kind of meaning it may have for participants. Therefore, he and others (Hornbrook 1998; Bennett 1984) are interested in investigating the possible meanings that

can be generated when a subject is presented in a dramatic form. They argue that these meanings influence how participants comprehend the drama and what they learn from it.

One of the chief criteria that Bolton uses to judge whether a dramatic event qualifies as an arts experience is the level of meaning that it can produce:

Thus not only must the audience (including the 'spectator' component of the players) see what is going on as something created, they must further see it 'as meaningful in a fictional context', that is, going beyond the immediate sense of the action by pointing to something beyond itself (2000, p.25).

Eriksson and Jantzen reinforce Bolton's assertion that "action in order to be dramatic form and not just a simulation of everyday life, must reflect levels/layers of meaning beyond itself" (2000, p. 12).

This invites the question about what 'meaning' represents in drama-in-education. Can meaning be seen as synonymous with learning content? Or does it relate instead to the kind of learning that can emerge through an aesthetic appreciation of form?

Theatre as an art form frames the action on stage and transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. It can therefore be seen to add meaning to events that would otherwise be insignificant. The particular focus that theatre form presents to members of an audience stimulates them to ask questions such as "What does the empty chair *amount* to?' 'What are the possible underlying values or rules or parameters or laws?'" (Bolton 2000, p. 27). These are the kinds of questions that we rarely stop

to ask ourselves during the onward flow of everyday existence. In theatre however, we know that whatever is placed in that special space has significance and will somehow be integral to past events and to what follows. Bolton gives an example of how a role-play can be transformed into theatre:

I learnt that there is such a thing as a 'moment of theatre', for example, a depiction by a small group representing, say, a photograph or a still moment of action, perhaps accompanied by voice-overs expressing personal thoughts or underlying implications. This simultaneous exposure of many levels of meaning was just as illuminating, indeed in practice often more profound because it is sometimes easier for youngsters to handle, than a structured living through experience leading to a crisis (2000, p. 24).

It appears that when the drama is frozen and presents itself for observation like a picture in an art gallery, its artistic form becomes more apparent and meaningful than when it operates in 'now time'. The main concern of drama operating in 'now time' is the creation of an ongoing 'slice of life', with the emphasis on depicting moments of crisis. However, in forum theatre and in the Watergate example given earlier, 'now time' is halted and drama's symbolic nature is highlighted. This gives the 'audience' time to pause and respond to the multiple layers of meaning inherent in the dramatic moment depicted.

If, as Bolton argues, the art form of drama is concerned with depth of meaning, what meanings are being presented through the form of drama?

Heathcote (1989) has identified different levels of meaning in drama, and Gilham (1989) has further developed her ideas. Their ideas are presented for comparison in a 'Levels of Meaning' table in Eriksson and Jantzen (1992) – see Fig. 7 below.

Levels of Meaning		
LEVELS	HEATHCOTE	GILLHAM
ACTION	the behaviour, the way something is done	the behaviour, the way something is done.
MOTIVATION	why someone does it, the immediate reason	the degree of awareness of the social conditioning of his/her intention: why someone thinks he/she acts. Individual (class) consciousness.
INVESTMENT	what's at stake that drives them to do it.	the social implications of someone's intention to act: whose interests are being served. Social (class) relation.
MODEL	where the behaviour comes from that is being "copied" or rejected.	the historical conditioning of the action: the historical models (conventions) that are at work. The action "done thus".
STANCE	why life is as it is, view of life in universal terms	the action as deriving from universal laws of human nature: why life is as it is, what is to be human

Fig. 7: Heathcote's and Gilham's *Levels of Meaning* (Eriksson & Jantzen 1992)

For Heathcote these levels are concerned with the subjective nature of human behaviour. Gilham, however, has reinterpreted them to reflect “the relationship between the subjective character of the action and its societal significance” (Eriksson et al. 1992, p. 12).

Both use identical categories when describing levels of meaning; these categories are: action, motivation, investment, model and stance. Each, however, places a difference of emphasis on what they perceive as constituting meaning in drama. As these levels of meaning are presented as being an important element of recognising drama as an art form, they deserve closer examination.

Both Heathcote and Gilham agree that the most basic level is *action*, which is a representation of behaviour—a demonstration of the way something is done. Role-play is often employed in adult education in this way, especially in the area of vocational training. For instance, students learning about the hospitality industry would use role-play to practise the correct way to serve customers at a bar or to book a guest into a hotel. This kind of role-play mainly resides at the level of reproducing and reinforcing acceptable behaviours.

The next level is *motivation*. This relates to an investigation of the immediate reason behind the action, and according to Gilham should also include awareness of people’s social conditioning and a consciousness of how class impacts on this.

The *investment* level is concerned with the external factors that drive the person to do the action. For Gilham, this relates to whose interests are being served by doing the action, and is linked to an understanding of social class relations.

Model, the next category, seeks to examine where the behaviour comes from that is being 'copied' or rejected. In Gilham's analysis this has to include "the historic conditioning of the action: the historical models (conventions) that are at work" (in Eriksson and Jantzen 1992, p. 12).

Finally there is *stance*, about which both Heathcote and Gilham agree. *Stance* reflects how the action derives from "universal laws of human nature" (in Eriksson and Jantzen 1992, p. 12), and involves an investigation of what it means to be human.

Havell reinforces the idea that meaning in art is linked to concepts of universal understanding. He argues that drama can only become an art form when "characters and events become invested with meaning that is somehow greater than their obvious representation, when they become resonant with a cluster of meanings and feelings which not only unify the action but also universalise it" (in Abbs 1987, p. 177).

This examination of the Heathcote/Gilham models of meaning suggests that any dramatic scenario can become an art form when it displays multiple levels of meaning. Consequently, it is unlikely that drama scenarios that reside merely at the *action* level of meaning (as can be the case in simulations) will be characterised as being a form of art.

Bennett (1984) provides an example of how the five levels mentioned above could operate in practice. He also argues that the kind of meaning that can be promoted through drama is a contested area. The subject content of the drama lesson he describes is historical and relates to 'English Village Life before the Industrial Revolution'. In that lesson the children experience life as servants in the big house belonging to the squire. Bennett focusses on an incident where a serving girl is locked up

in a cupboard by her mistress for a small offence. Each of the five levels of meaning can be identified in this example.

The *action* level of meaning resides with the mistress locking her servant in the cupboard. The *motivation* behind this is the punishment of the servant's misdemeanour, but this also relates to class structures at this time and the power of the wealthy to control a poor person's life. The punishment can be seen to be in the interest of the powerful as they have an *investment* in keeping the servant class 'in their place'. The *model* of the powerful exploiting the less powerful can be seen to have existed since history began, and is being replicated in this context during the Industrial Revolution. This dramatic scenario can be seen to adopt a particular *stance* that highlights the universal human concept of humanity's common experience of injustice. All these different levels of meaning are inherent in the drama and can lead to participants learning of 'man's inhumanity to man'.

Bennett points out, however, that if students are made aware that in eighteenth century England servants were legally bound to their master or mistress and therefore flight or rebellion was a criminal offence, there emerges the opportunity for deeper levels of learning still:

The girl is locked up, the key displayed. What it symbolises in this case is not the injustice of an unfeeling mistress who victimises a poor girl, but the legal coercion by which the propertied class kept the servant class in its place – which is indeed a universal but of a different order (1984, p. 11).

Bennett reveals certain problems inherent in the *stance* level of meaning, and highlights the danger of focusing on universal understandings of

human nature. He suggests that *stance*, far from providing the deepest level of meaning in dramatic art, is in danger of only being able to offer banal platitudes.

Concepts of 'universal understandings of humanity' are viewed skeptically, not only by Bennett (1983) but by Hornbrook (1987). Hornbrook sees these kinds of meaning as being based in "an intense Kantian morality derived from Romantic metaphysics that we associate with English in schools" (1987, p. 3). He suggests that although apparently apolitical, in reality the concept of universal understanding reinforces conservative values because it dilutes ideas of difference and encourages belief in bland generalisations such as those proposed by Heathcote: "'There always seems to have to be wars' and 'These are all licensed to kill'" (1984, p. 35).

Gillham's development of Heathcote's humanist model of meaning introduces contradictory elements and sends mixed messages about what drama should be teaching students. Although Gillham's final stance, like that of Heathcote, appears to promote universal understandings of humanity, other levels seem to relate to a Marxist view of class-consciousness. This reveals the tensions that exist in drama-in-education between practitioners such as Bennett (1984) and Hornbrook (1985)—who see drama as a tool for political enlightenment, and others such as Heathcote (1984) and Bolton (1984)—who perceive it as a means of conveying romantic notions of universal morality. This latter perception is coloured by the Jungian (1968) psychological concept of common consciousness. Heathcote points out:

Everything that has happened before me I have something in common with, and this is my secret for finding material for drama (in Wagner 1979, p. 13).

Ultimately, both Heathcote and Gilham's models demonstrate that the levels of meaning that change drama from a simulation of behaviour into an art form are determined by the ideological perspective of its designers. These models of meaning seem to focus more on the content of the drama rather than on its aesthetic potential. Gilham and Bennett's approaches, in particular, indicate how participants need to have an awareness of specific political and historical content in order to derive the deepest levels of meaning from a dramatic situation.

In Bennett's servant/mistress example, extra historical information is offered to emphasise the political meaning of the dramatic situation portrayed. That information reveals the grossly unequal power relations that existed between the ruling and servant classes at that moment in history. The focus chosen for the dramatic scenario—in this case servant/mistress relationships—together with the content given to the students by the teacher, are also key influences on what meaning it might have for participants, and therefore what is able to be learnt through the drama.

If it is the case that the content given to students provides the key to the kind of meaning the drama will have for them, then the responsibility for what is learned will mainly reside with the teacher. She will determine what kind of information should be shared with the participants, and her values will colour how this information is interpreted. In addition, the teacher's choice of a particular fictional

context will also affect the students' understanding of the content they are exploring through the drama. O'Toole concedes:

Where negotiation of subject matter or form exists, it is invariably mediated by the teacher's objectives, aspirations and level of acceptance of students' contributions. It is part of the nature of formal education to negotiate children towards outcomes acceptable to the teacher (1992, p. 226).

This is no different to what happens in many other educational approaches. Learning is influenced by what the facilitator has in mind and the information she decides to provide for participants. That information could be overtly political in nature if, as the Bennett example shows, the facilitator decides it should be. Just as equally, the facilitator could, by the same process, manipulate the dramatic focus and content so that other kinds of learning take place. That is the case with the romantic humanism of Heathcote.

The political focus of forum theatre could also be enhanced or diluted according to the perspective the participants are encouraged to take. If participants are asked to identify and depict moments of oppression in their lives, this will provoke a different kind of learning than if the facilitator were to ask them to focus on a problem that has occurred in a particular aspect of their lives. The former will encourage participants to engage overtly in a discussion of power relationships – thus lending itself to political education, whilst the latter would encourage a more experiential, problem-solving approach.

It is my view that if content is seen as the most important aspect of what can be learned through drama, role-play's aesthetic potential will

be diminished. The aesthetic focuses on what the impact dramatic form has on a person's reason and senses, rather than seeing the content of what is presented in drama as its most meaningful aspect. For Reid, aesthetic meaning is "multiple and interwoven: a work of art is itself an 'embodiment of meaning'" (in O'Toole 1992, p. 220). It is not so much the content that is important but the way it is mediated and framed through the art form, and the impression this has on an audience. This view of learning through the arts allows for individual and collective constructions of meaning that reach beyond those that have been pre-figured by the facilitator.

Heathcote and Gilham's models highlight the importance of content, and therefore the role of the facilitator, in drama. In doing so they restrict what role-play as a theatre arts strategy has to offer adult education. In adult learning the student is expected to take much of the responsibility for choosing what they want to learn, and for selecting its content (Candy, Crebert et al. 1994; Knowles 1975, 1990). This student-centred approach suggests that in using role-play the facilitator should have less control of the meaning that may be created, and the learners more control. A strength of the forum theatre approach is that it asks participants to choose what they perceive as pertinent learning in a context that is relevant to them, rather than letting the facilitator decide what the learning focus and role-play scenario should be.

I would argue that if the importance of role-play's 'significant form' is reduced, so also is its particular strength as a learning approach. If, however, form is seen as a means of promoting aesthetic learning, then role-play may have the potential to offer more interesting and varied learning possibilities than any of the other options discussed above.

2. Can role-play stimulate aesthetic learning?

It is only once role-play is positioned as a theatre art form that its aesthetic possibilities can be realised. This raises some important issues for what can be learnt through role-play in adult education. In Chapters 5 and 6 I described the particular features of drama's 'significant form', and explained how these interact to produce a work of art. That in turn demands a special attention from its audience—an aesthetic response. This complex experience, which is notoriously difficult to articulate, involves heightened sensitivity and an awareness of being mentally, physically and emotionally present in the moment. Abbs notes how:

Through aesthetic activity we half-apprehend and half create a world of understanding, of heightened perception, of heightened meaning. Art, we might say, exists for the meaning's sake but that meaning cannot be grasped outside of the form in which it finds expression (1987, p. 53).

This fusion of form and meaning is fundamental to the aesthetic experience. It provides the basis for the kind of complete understanding that the arts approach can offer education (Abbs 1987, 1994; Best 1985; Langer 1958, 1979; Reid 1980). I believe that this total sense of knowing needs to be investigated further, because it could represent the kind of learning that is relevant to role-play. Aesthetics could also provide a useful framework for considering how to engage with the emotional aspects of role-play in adult education, because the heightening of the senses in the aesthetic experience is unavoidably "allied with the emotion" (Dewey 1934, p.21).

According to Abbs, (1987) the focus of aesthetic learning resides not in the factual information that forms the basis of a role-play or drama event, but in an appreciation of how this content is framed through the art form. Art form offers a representation of completeness that is almost impossible to replicate in our complex, fractured everyday lives. As the playwright Jean Anhouilh observes:

Life is very nice, but it lacks form. It is the aim of art to give it some (<http://www.quoteworld.org>).

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation report on 'The Arts in Schools' also reinforces this idea that the arts engender a unique sense of completeness:

The arts promote a very real integration in our sense and appreciation of a whole range of meanings that are present in one organic whole. This characteristic of synthesis is to be found in no other mode of discourse. Elsewhere the general thrust—in some the whole emphasis—is more often on analysis and dissection than on synthesis and unification (1982, p. 23).

When form is manipulated during the process of art making, or observed as a final product by an audience, it makes the audience feel that life is somehow predictable and controllable. It is this use of the art form—to fulfill the incomplete—that creates feelings of achievement and satisfaction at a fundamental level of consciousness in the participants. Murdoch describes the importance of this process:

The urge to prove that where we intuit unity there really is unity is a deep emotional motive to philosophy, to art, to thinking itself. Intellect is naturally one making (1992, p. 1).

Andresen reinforces this perspective by arguing that “emotion plays an essential role in achieving unity within the aesthetic experience” (1996, p. 8).

Theatre art, in particular, provides a form that encapsulates and manipulates moments of human action, and by doing this “implies a wider unified system” (Murdoch 1992, p. 1). The function of art form in a world that is dominated by “plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos” (Murdoch 1992, p. 1) is to transform this uncertain world into something that appears stable, controllable and familiar. Goode and Neelands propose that the key reason artists work together and invest their energies in creating a piece of theatre is because of their “desire to create order and significance out of our communal experience of life” (1995, p. 17).

Art form has provided this function since the beginnings of civilisation. In fact concepts of civilisation are often related to humans’ ability to make art and take control of their environment, as the Aboriginal people in Australia did when they painted aspects of their lives and community beliefs on the walls of caves, and created stories about their history. Langer suggests that “every culture develops some kind of art as surely as it develops language” (Langer 1958, p. 1). Even where there is no evidence of any real mythology or religion in a particular culture, “all have some art—dance, song, design” (Langer 1958, p. 1)—even if this is only evident on carved tools or the decoration of the human body. For Abbs, aesthetic responding is pre-verbal, and consequently

linked to the “sensuous, physical, dramatic, bodily” (1987, p. 60) aspects of humanity.

Art and the aesthetic, therefore, can be seen as one of the most basic forms of expression, rooted in “bodily response and primitive engagement” (Abbs 1987, p. 54), and residing primarily in the senses. Best, however, argues that it is the dynamic combination of feeling *and reason* that is integral to aesthetic understanding, and that “*both* attitudes are appropriate and enriching, and even, in one sense, complimentary” (1985, p. 132).

It is this complex dynamic of feeling plus reason in the arts that Reid (1980) attempts to analyse in his book ‘Meaning in the Arts’. He distinguishes between ‘apprehension’ and ‘comprehension’ when describing the essence of aesthetic responding. Comprehending suggests a foregrounding of the rational, whilst apprehending seems “a more accurate word to denote the privileging of the sensuous and affective components of meaning pertaining to an art work, over the rational and cognitive” (in O’Toole 1992, p. 221). So whilst aesthetic responding involves the engagement of both feeling and reason, it is the feeling or emotional element that predominates. Abbs explains the holistic and integrated nature of the aesthetic experience:

All aesthetic activity as it is developed through the manifold forms of the arts is simultaneously perceptive, affective and cognitive; it can offer an education, therefore, of the highest order not through the analytical intellect but through the engaged sensibility (1987, p. 55).

Gaita also challenges the idea that aesthetic experience should be seen as chiefly residing in the realms of emotional and sensual understanding. He argues that reason also needs to be a key feature of the aesthetic dynamic if it is to be truly educative:

Art may delight us, but if it is to teach us, if it is to show us how the world is, then we must extract plain cognitive content from form that often beguiles, dazzles and seduces us (2002, p. 96).

According to Gaita, an aesthetic response requires a person not only to be sensible to the development and presentation of the art form—its look, shape, and sound—but also to understand and evaluate the art work being developed or presented. Havell who suggests that “aesthetic attention to structural form is a sensed/felt response to an experience” (in Abbs 1987, p. 178) also reinforces Gaita’s argument that the felt response has to be evaluated for educational purposes. Abbs argues that it is this evaluation that “makes intelligible (and communicable) the aesthetic response” (1987, p. 61).

Evaluation in this context refers to the separation of the person from the aesthetic response they experienced. Only then can there be an appreciation of how successfully the different elements of form—for example the use of tension, space and symbol—combined to create meaning.

If the promotion of the aesthetic (and the aesthetic field) is seen as a crucial element of arts education, then this is sufficient to direct the educational purpose of role-play as an arts strategy. Role-play can be employed as a means of developing aesthetic awareness—which means

that the emotional aspects of learning must be valued as much as, if not more than, its rational elements. If this is the case, and one of the key reasons for using role-play becomes affective education, this raises the issue of how emotional learning should be facilitated, and the responsibility the tutor has in mediating this process. Does this change their role from educator to therapist, and if so what does this mean for learning in drama?

3. Is role-play concerned with therapeutic learning?

Theatre has traditionally been perceived as a healing force. Grainger observes that in ancient Greece Aristotle envisioned tragedy as not just being for an audience's entertainment, but also as "a healing release or purgation of emotions" (1996, p. 30). Catharsis was seen as a kind of psychological healing process—a cleansing of feelings that could otherwise disturb or cause imbalance.

Fox (1994) also proposes close links between theatre and therapy. He stresses the anthropological roots of theatre and the part it plays in community rituals, many of which are linked to healing. This process would be mediated by a Shaman—who links the community to the spiritual world—and through this connection people are made whole. Fox's model of playback theatre is designed to tap into the therapeutic nature of drama through community story telling, and in it the conductor takes on the shamanic role.

Theatre directors such as Peter Brook (1995) and Grotowsky (1976) value a form of acting that focuses on the psychological aspects of the actors, encouraging them to break through 'barriers' or 'obstacles' so

they can access hidden depths of their psyche. This approach is categorised by Brook (1986) as being a form of holy theatre. Acting then becomes a therapeutic process of personal discovery as well as a means of communicating a text to an audience. This kind of healing linked to theatre involves both the audience and the actor, and is psychological and emotional in nature.

Another valuable body of literature in the area of dramatherapy (referred to as drama therapy in the USA) also focuses on how role-play can be used as a strategy for learning and healing. Dramatherapy, as its name suggests, uses drama as its framework for practice. It intentionally uses dramatic form, theatre processes and related techniques “in order to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth” (Barham in Chesner 1996, p. 115). Landy—an important writer in this area—sees drama as an educational method as being closely aligned to dramatherapy. He suggests that dramatherapy “incorporates the aims of educational and recreational drama but is greater than the sum of the two” (1994, p. 16), because it focuses on the healing potential of the dramatic approach. Dramatherapy theory and practice, therefore, offer a perspective on role-play that values not only its theatrical foundations and its usefulness as an educational tool, but also its potential to heal.

By being directly linked to educational drama, dramatherapy should be expected to provide insights into the relationship between drama, therapy and learning. I will examine a selection of dramatherapy literature in order to reveal the connections between the dramatherapy perspective and role-play strategy. This will help establish the validity of adopting the intention of using role-play in adult education for

personal and group therapy, and in that case suggest some of its implications for learning.

Because role-play is so closely aligned with theatre, it has the potential to be used as a tool for therapeutic learning. Dramatherapy literature emphasises the idea that role-play is inherently dramatic. For example, Landy argues that “without role, drama could not exist” (1991b, p. 5). He states that impersonation is the key element of the dramatic experience. He also perceives role as being fundamental to drama because it involves imaginative speculation and enactment. He sees the “healing potential of role” as residing in the “dramatic paradox” of the experience of being simultaneously “me” and “not me” (1992, p. 7). It is this balancing of the contradictory worlds of the real and the fictional that gives drama its therapeutic power. Role-play allows participants to move between two realities—the world of the imagination and that of everyday existence. Therefore, when participants engage in this strategy they are “capable of both viewing a problematic issue and working it through” (Landy 1992, p. 7) therapeutically in the drama. He accordingly sees role as “the primary bridge between theatre and drama therapy” (1991b, p. 4).

Dramatherapy practitioners recognise that other aspects of drama are linked to psychological healing. Chesner suggests that there is a connection between the body and the unconscious. There are many psychoanalytical case studies where particular physical symptoms are shown to be unconscious expressions of psychological pain (McDougal in Chesner 1996). Enacting a scenario and going into role involves a person being physically engaged. According to this view, it is this physical involvement in the dramatic experience that “brings the emotions and the unconscious onto the therapeutic stage” (Chesner

1996, p. 115). This connection between the emotions, imagination and embodiment is reinforced by Spinoza who proposed that “mind and body move in parallel” (in Scruton in Monk & Raphael 2002, p. 161).

Once role-play has been acknowledged as essentially dramatic—and therefore linked to theatre—it is possible then to argue that role-play has a therapeutic aspect. Theatre has traditionally been seen as providing a therapeutic space for both the audience and actors, and it is consistent with this that role-play—through its connections with theatre—can also be seen to have a healing potential. Additionally, the physical aspects of role-play and its employment of the ‘dramatic paradox’ can tap into the unconscious and release emotions in a therapeutic way.

Having established the connections between drama and therapy, I will now explore how an appreciation of dramatherapy can help clarify the kind of learning that can be developed through the use of role-play in adult education.

The power of projection

Many dramatherapy concepts could be useful to the adult educator who chooses to use role-play as a learning strategy. For present purposes, I will concentrate on the idea of ‘projection’. This concept is central in helping facilitators better understand the characteristics of role-play and how it can be used educationally and therapeutically. Projection also introduces ideas of ‘over-’ and ‘under-distancing’. These concepts are important because they can increase our understanding of how participants in a role-play can be encouraged to be involved in the

experience, but also be critical and distanced from what they are doing. They can thus be enabled to learn from it, and not be left wallowing in an emotional quagmire.

The emotional component of role-play is one of the reasons facilitators are reluctant to use it in adult education. It is often linked to a participant over-identifying with a role and not being able to separate fiction from reality. Over-identification is avoided in the dramatherapy method because rather than using material directly from a participant's own life, it deliberately uses dramatic form to give participants therapeutic space from the issues they are exploring. Jennings notes how "in dramatherapy, people are dramatically distanced from their material" (1992, p. 118). This is achieved through an understanding of how the projective nature of dramatic form can be used to both engage and detach participants from their personal experience. By understanding how dramatherapists do this, whilst acknowledging that role-play through its roots in drama also has this projective potential, we can learn much from the dramatherapy approach.

Jones (1991) identifies the five core processes involved in dramatherapy. These are:

- Dramatic projection
- The therapeutic performance process
- Dramatherapeutic empathy and distancing
- Representation, personification and impersonation
- The interactive audience and witnessing (1991 p. 8).

'Dramatic projection' is placed at the forefront of his list. Jones describes projection as involving "the placing of aspects of ourselves or

our feelings into other people or things" (1996, p. 129). An example of this is when bad weather is perceived to mirror a person's feelings of depression, or when a pet seems to be empathising with the different moods and feelings of its owner. This kind of projection can lead to new insights. For example, when the rain stops and the sun pierces through the dark clouds, this can register as a signal that things will improve eventually, hence feelings of depression can also be conquered.

By their very nature, theatre and drama processes are projective (Jones 1996; Wiltshire 1982; Holland 1964). They involve responding 'as if' the participant were another person. However, to do this, participants will draw on elements from their own experience and their understanding of themselves and their social situation. In other words, aspects of their real selves will be projected onto the fictional roles they are playing.

Jones describes the experience of the actor Brian Cox who, after playing the part of Shakespeare's King Lear, found he was still experiencing a personal identification with the role he had played. His nearness in age to that of the character, and his fears of rejection in old age by those he loved, preyed on his mind and he admitted that he still had "a lot of Lear hanging around...which I haven't got rid of: a sense of physical old age, a sense of my body, all kinds of things that I find a burden" (Cox in Jones 1986, p. 133).

Cox as an actor consciously participated in the art form of drama, but at the same time unconsciously—through the process of enactment—projected many of his concerns about ageing onto the character he portrayed. This led him to an examination of his own feelings about these issues.

Jones argues that “projection is an important part of seeing oneself in theatrical performances” (1996, p. 132). It is an integral part of the dramatic paradox where we experience being 'me' but 'not me'. The process of taking on a role in drama and gaining personal insight through projection is similar to that experienced in the everyday example of the sun piercing through the clouds and bringing hope. The difference appears to be that drama provides a more conscious and deliberate method for engaging in projection, and therefore for examining the personal insights that can be gained from participation in this process.

The dramatherapy approach uses dramatic projection as a means of gaining personal understanding, by virtue of it “helping the client to project their problems out into dramatic material” (Jones 1996, p.132). Dramatherapists are able to do this is through the careful use of projective techniques – which are designed to encourage participants to either identify very closely with a character they are playing or engage less obviously with the role they adopt. Projective techniques are therefore used as tools by dramatherapists to determine how personally involved or distanced clients should be from their dramatic role. The idea is to avoid clients identifying too closely with a role (under-distancing), or not engaging with a role at all (over-distancing) (Landy 1993b, p. 25). The result is that the right balance can be achieved between a consciousness of the personal and the fictional. This can lead to a greater awareness of “how deeply connected the expression is with one’s feelings and thoughts” (Landy 1993a, p. 25). If this balance is achieved, then there is a greater chance of the client being fully engaged in the dramatic paradox so they can then begin to look critically at how the 'other' (the role) impinges on 'the self' (the personal).

Projective techniques can evidently be effective tools in the hands of dramatherapists, creating different levels of dramatic distance or involvement with their clients. The same techniques can also be a valuable strategy for the facilitator of role-play in adult education. They can help prevent the kind of over- and under-distancing that can be problematic when using role-play as a learning strategy, and allows the personal and emotional to be explored in an emotionally safe manner.

The practical application of projective techniques

In the book 'Drama Therapy – Concepts, Theories and Practices', Landy identifies different kinds of projective techniques "that are at the heart of the dramatherapy experience" (1994, p. 135). Among these are photography, video, use of objects (including puppets and masks), make-up, storytelling, scripted and unscripted performance, and extended dramatisation.

If these projective strategies are considered in terms of their ability to emotionally involve (under-distance) or detach (over-distance) the participant from the role-play experience, then, as we might expect, the most involving strategies will be those that ask participants to play themselves within an extended dramatic situation. Role-plays that ask participants to imagine they are going for a job interview or negotiating with their manager for a pay rise are the ones most likely to engender strong personal identification and possible emotional involvement. That will be the case though they appear superficially to relate to mundane situations.

In contrast, strategies that make “a graphic distinction between self and non-self” (Landy 1994, p. 135)—such as the use of photography and objects—are potentially the ones that encourage a greater personal detachment from the drama. If we examine in detail the way Landy uses photography as a projective strategy, it becomes clearer how a facilitator can manipulate the distance or involvement of participants in the therapeutic process.

Landy (1994) asks the clients to bring to the dramatherapy session two photographs of themselves, one from the past and one from the present. At first inspection, the use of personal material such as photographs might be seen as an example of encouraging the participants to strongly identify with the drama that will be created from these stimuli. However, Landy argues the opposite. He proposes that the representational nature of the photographic form *has already distilled* these two moments in time and created a space between the participants and the events being examined. In addition the choice of a photograph from *the past* also provides another form of distance for the participants.

Landy’s warm-up requires the participants to say three things they like and three things they do not like about themselves in the pictures. Then one person is chosen to become the focus of the dramatherapy work. The therapist asks this person to choose one photograph and create a physical image of it using other people in the group and objects (such as chairs and tables) that are in the room at the time. This process encourages participants to identify with the personal nature of the material, but in a highly structured way so the boundaries are clear. However, in order to prevent under-distancing, the participant whose photograph is being re-created physically by the other members of the

group, is asked to act as the director. The director then has to choose someone else to assume their role in the representation of the event. In this distanced role, the director instructs people in the physical photographic representation how to “move and interact according to his feelings” (1994, p. 135). Finally the therapist asks the director to freeze the photograph again and address the person who is playing them in the drama. The director must say three things they like or don’t like about the person (that is themselves) in the picture they have created.

Thus the directors are able, through the role assigned to them, to witness themselves in action and gain a more critical perspective of themselves and their relationships with others in social situations. As Langley observes:

Just as a play is literature until it is enacted, so a life event is a memory until it is replayed. Then the emotion can be felt again, expressed more effectively or maybe analysed in order to achieve a different perspective that facilitates growth rather than blocks it (1990, p. 3).

If the director had entered the physical representation of the photograph and played themselves rather than watching someone else enacting their role, then the identification with the role played would be strong and more likely to lead to under distancing. This in turn could result in difficulties in seeing the separation between self and the role played, and therefore difficulty in finding the necessary projective space to learn from this experience.

Landy's use of projective techniques is clearly for therapeutic purposes. They are designed to help participants gain deep personal insights into themselves and the way they behave socially. However, at the same time they also show what can be learnt through role-play and, thus, provide a rationale for using this strategy in adult education within this framework. Role-play becomes a tool for personal development and affective learning.

Adult educators, however, are not trained therapists. Given the strong relationship between drama and healing, we need to ask how dramatherapy theory and practice can really help role-play practitioners in adult education. How can they better understand *why* they are using this learning strategy and *how* best to manage it? I will attempt to show how the projective techniques employed in dramatherapy are relevant to facilitators of role-play and can provide insights into how to value the affective elements of learning that can emerge from using this strategy.

Can dramatherapy help us to understand what can be learned through role-play?

An understanding of the principle of projection can help participants find a balance between personal involvement and critical distance when they engage in role-play. It is the insights they gain from doing this can produce significant personal learning.

Role-play provides the opportunity for participants to experience something approximating a 'real situation' – without having to suffer the full consequences that being in that situation would involve.

Because role-play has this ability to replicate 'reality' so effectively, it is usual for participants to be encouraged to play themselves or others in situations that are familiar and relevant to their everyday lives. This ability of role-play to mirror 'real life', and reveal some of its interpersonal and political complexities, is seen as its main strength as a learning approach.

If we referred to dramatherapy theory and practice however, this perceived strength could also be seen as a weakness. Landy (1994) has pointed out in his discussion of projective techniques that the closer a participant is to their reality, the harder it will be for them to separate themselves from the role they are playing and gain enough critical distance from the experience to learn from it. In such cases under-distancing is likely to occur, with the problem of a participant identifying too closely to a role being played. Dramatherapy theory and practice, however, also offers some solutions to the conundrum of how to use the strength of replicating realism inherent in the strategy, without leaving participants emotionally angry and confused about their participation in the role-play event.

One example can be found in an examination of Landy's (1994) use of photographs as a projective strategy. This provides some ideas for role-play practice. The photographic form is used to achieve a balance between the participant's involvement in the role drama—her ability to relate to the experience and project her feelings and ideas onto it—and gaining the necessary distance to look at the experience anew and learn from it. Using freeze frame or still photo techniques in role-play will have the same effect as the physical representation of the photograph used in the Landy example. If a participant chooses to take on the director's role whilst another member of the group plays their role, or if

role-reversal techniques are used, this will also allow participants to project themselves into a role but from a more emotionally comfortable distance. Landy's example of the use of projective techniques in drama situations is only one of many that can be found in dramatherapy literature.

Van Ments (1983) makes the distinction between using role-play in therapy and using role-play in adult education by stressing that their aims are quite different. There has, however, always been a therapeutic perspective to adult education. This is evident if we study the influence of humanistic adult educators such as Rogers (1983) and Heron (1989, 1999, 2001). They argue that adult education has first to address the psychological and emotional development of the whole person before other more pragmatic educational goals can be achieved. Personal understanding and social development are key themes recurring in adult education literature (Knowles 1990; Candy et al. 1994). Rather than denying it, I believe it makes better sense to clearly acknowledge the therapeutic elements of adult education. From that point we can go on to recognise role-play as a useful strategy for exploring this area of personal and social development. We can then more readily accept the potential value offered by strategies identified in the therapeutic literature. In the case of role-play, dramatherapy literature could be seen as particularly relevant, because both have dramatic form as their common foundation.

Adult educators are not trained therapists and it would be presumptuous for them to act as if they were. However, they can learn from studying the therapeutic approach to role-play in dramatherapy because it provides a rationale for using role-play as a means of developing significant personal learning. This is a goal that ties in with

the humanist tradition of adult education. By valuing the theatre arts element of role-play, and studying how to manipulate its dramatic form, it is possible to see how the emotional aspects inherent in this kind of learning can be valued yet managed in a way that benefits the learner. It does this by allowing them look critically at how they feel.

4. Transformative learning

In the State of Victoria in Australia, the four dimensions of arts education are classified as being “perceiving, transforming, expressing and appreciating”. The Queensland arts manifesto also suggests that arts education involves the processes of “forming, presenting, responding and transforming” (O’Toole, 1992, p.219). It is this transformational aspect of the theatre arts approach to learning that I want to look at further.

Schindler describes the transformational learning that took place in a drama class he facilitated on the Holocaust with Year 9 students. He wanted the students to understand something of the social and political context surrounding the Holocaust. Schindler started by getting students to look at a picture ‘The Toads of Possession’ by the German Expressionist artist George Gross and asked them explore their response to the picture by writing down words and phrases they associated with it. He then invited the students in small groups to create an improvisation “that would explore the kind of things that happen in society” (1995, p.8) and to reflect privately on what they had created and why they had chosen to represent the issue in a particular way.

Then Schindler adopted the role of the organizer of an illegal secret meeting. In this role he persuaded the students to share their understandings of what they had learnt in a larger group forum. To help students to further reflect on their experience, they were asked to work in pairs with one person who had been at the meeting telling another person what had happened. Finally the students were asked to create a movement sequence using particular words and phrases as a soundtrack that represented the kind of society in Gross's picture. The students kept journals and used these to reflect and analyse on what they had learnt from their involvement in the drama. Schindler uses this material to analyse the learning that occurred in the group.

Some of the changes that he observes are concerned with changes of perception. Schindler links this with the creation of the art form in drama:

Form making is not a process of finishing something, it is a forward moving procedure constantly simplifying, seeing more clearly (1995, p. 13).

The class had worked through a problem "to get a new view out of it" (Heathcote in Schindler, 1995, p. 13). This helped the group to look differently at the problem they were exploring and transform their understanding of what it represented.

Part of theatre's significant form is its ability to offer multiple views of the same situation. It can present and therefore give value to a range of different perceptions of the same event. Also, as it allows participants to explore past events and speculate on future happenings, this can lead

them to understand more about what elements influenced the situation being explored, and what its future consequences may be.

The transformative learning possibilities of role-play are particularly apparent in the forum theatre example described in Chapter 7. Participants engaging in the negotiation role-play are not only able to explore the past and future consequences of a situation, but through the forum theatre game they can change the problem situation by exploring other possibilities and approaches to the scenario. Because the development of the role-play takes place within a group, this also ensures that individual perceptions of an event are not privileged, but are challenged by how others view the situation. O'Toole argues that "a proportion of the meaning which emerges {from drama} is shared—as social meaning, at once a part of and apart from the social personal constructions of meaning which each individual negotiates within the experience" (1992, p. 217).

Drama as a learning strategy can challenge existing perceptions of a person or an event. This links it directly to the adult educator Mezirow and his ideas of transformational learning. Mezirow's (1990) theory of 'transformative learning' is concerned with how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experiences. He argues that "meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are validated through human interaction and communication" (Mezirow 1990, p. xiv). Transformative learning occurs initially through an encounter with a disorientating dilemma, and is further developed through reflection and action. It is a form of learning that is concerned with the exploration of values and attitude change.

Mezirow (1975) began developing this model of learning after he had worked with mature women returning to college after a period away from academic study. He noticed the radical changes that occurred in this group of students and the way they changed their perception of themselves and their place in society. Later Mezirow developed the idea of personal transformation further, using Habermas's (1978) constructivist theory of 'communicative competence'. Cranton describes the chief concern of Mezirow's transformative learning theory as being to foster a person's ability "to make assumptions implicit, contextualise them, validate them and act on them" (1994, p.24).

Mezirow describes transformative learning as a process involving critical self-reflection which results in learners revising their values or way of seeing the world:

Transformative learning involves a particular function of reflection: reassessing the presuppositions on which our beliefs are based and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments (1990, p.18).

Newman describes the concept of transformative learning more simply. It is about exposing "the kinds of mental filter we develop that distort our perceptions of reality, and let us see what we think we should see" (1994, p. 170). Education, in this context, is seen as a means of challenging and expanding these limited perceptions, with critical reflection as the process employed to achieve this end.

It is often difficult for adult educators to think of ways to create a strong enough 'disorienting dilemma' that will trigger reflection and a

perceptual change in students in a classroom setting. Role-play, however, is a strategy that lends itself to the development of transformative learning. Role-play takes place in a specific context, and those acting out a role-play scenario have to deal with communication complexities similar to those that exist in reality. Role-play relies on participants using their imagination to speculate what it would be like to see a situation from other viewpoints, to feel what other people might feel, and perceive an event through their frame of understanding.

Jackson talks about this experience and how he responded to a drama about a teenage boy with cerebral palsy:

The theatre had not so much *taught* me in the sense of conveying new information, but had thrown new light on what I knew already. It had *dramatically* enhanced my understanding. That fleeting but profoundly resonant image, that way of seeing from another's viewpoint, embedded itself in my consciousness and provided me with a personal resource. To my surprise it has remained with me ever since as an intuitive reference point, a quick way of reminding myself—when for example meeting someone with a speech disability—that the lack of a conventionally articulate, fluent way of speaking cannot be equated with inadequacy. There is another voice (and more) within that I need to attend to (1999, p. 53).

Role-play as an art form has the potential to let participants view and examine the way they interact in real life—but at a distance that allows for critical reflection on what they experience. Goode and Neelands note how “art is always a ‘meta-commentary’ on lived experience; art is

by no means separable from material existence" (1995, p. 17). Role-play as an art form can offer a uniquely powerful form of learning—a space to explore how we live in society and how we live in the world. It has the capacity to offer multiple views and value varying perceptions of any event that is performed. In this way it invites "the exploration of ambiguities, pleasures, unease and contradictions which contemporary living entails" (Nicholson 1999, p. 85).

In summary, I have argued that once role-play is perceived as a theatre art form in adult education, that fresh way of framing it has the capacity to open up an awareness of the possibility of new areas of learning. Whilst content—including political content—can be taught through drama, this is not drama's chief strength as a learning strategy. More important is its ability to stimulate an appreciation of art form, which in turn can generate aesthetic understanding. Aesthetic responding involves a particular kind of consciousness, which "is built on the evidence of our senses" (Goode & Neelands 1995, p. 17). But as Nicholson explains, "it is transformative because it integrates the emotional with the rational" (1999, p. 82). Because it values the affective areas of learning, role-play can be seen as a therapeutic tool that, if used sensitively, can result in significant personal learning. In addition, role-play as an art form can be seen as linked to Mezirow's (1991) model of transformational learning, because its aesthetic can challenge participants' preconceptions and highlight the complexities and ambiguities that are inherent in any situation. Nicholson suggests that:

Because the aesthetic encompasses a range of artistic and dramatic narratives, it offers both a safe place from which to explore values, emotions and experiences, and invites a more

dangerous, and unsettling, challenge to familiar beliefs (1999, p. 87).

Nicholson's description of the aesthetic experience could be seen as encompassing a form of political education. That is because "pluralism is *in itself* a political stance from which established values might be challenged" (1999, p. 85) as they are in the forum theatre approach.

Role-play – putting the art back into the adult education curriculum

'The Arts in Schools' report of the The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation argues that there should be "a place for arts activities...within vocational courses for occupations other than the arts" (1982, p. 133). None of the vocational adult teacher training courses of my knowledge or involvement include arts as a learning approach in their curriculum. This provides a further reason for role-play to be perceived and utilised as a theatre arts strategy in adult education. It is an attempt to redress the way an arts approach to learning is neglected in this training area. Role-play as an art form can offer a unique method of learning, unavailable through other approaches.

Neelands argues that post September 11th 2001, it is now more important than ever to have the arts be a credible part of all educational curricular. He points out that the deadly low-tech assaults on America on September 11th challenged the idea "that technology and the mastery of technologies will resolve political, military and economic problems" (2002, p. 4). Neelands argues for "a more humanising curriculum in which more attention is given to developing compassion, empathy, tolerance, highly developed interpersonal skills and respect for

difference" (2002, p. 8). At the core of this curriculum there should be a focus on increasing students' capacity to imagine, and Neelands believes that this ability can be developed through the arts, and especially through drama.

Bond suggests that the development of the imagination is inexorably linked to a person's moral development, and therefore can be used for good or evil. He claims "*all human value comes from the imagination*" but how 'the self' is imagined and how 'the other' is imagined, will determine how much value or how little you will give to the other" (in Neelands 2002, p. 6). The question then becomes whether or not educational curricula are designed to "feed, nurture, guide and fulfill the humanising and compassionate potential of the imagination" (Neelands 2001, p. 6). Given the low priority of the arts in education in general, and in adult vocational education in particular, then I believe the answer to this question at present would be an emphatic 'No'.

However, if role-play is positioned as an arts strategy in adult vocational education curricula, then it becomes possible to value the humanising potential of the imagination. The very essence of drama and the role-play process is the process of imagining what it is like to be someone else. Neelands illuminates how:

At the heart of all drama and theatre is the opportunity for self-other imagining through the processes of role-taking; imagining oneself as the other, and in so doing to recognise the other in oneself (2002, p. 7).

Role-play, as an art form, encourages participants to view situations in different ways, to shift their usual and comfortable perspectives on the

world. This is achieved through the process of responding 'as if' they were another person or themselves in another situation. This movement into the world of 'as if' requires participants to speculate, to imagine how it might be for someone else, and most importantly how they might feel. It is the ability to imagine not only how another person might think, but how they might feel, that allows a person to develop empathy for another.

Because if you understand why someone is the way they are you don't be so cruel to them. And cruelty is too prevalent (Miriam Margolyes, actress, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1-2 Feb. 2003, Metropolitan, p.3).

Role-play not only encourages participants to feel empathy for others, but also stimulates them to reconsider who they are. When those participating in a role-play adopt different roles and respond 'as if' they were other people, they also have the opportunity to re-examine their personal identity. Neelands sees the act of role-playing as providing:

...the space for students to re-imagine and extend their 'multiple subjectivities'—their possible public and private 'selves'. Through role-taking students may discover a more complex range of selves that now includes, as a result of their role-taking, a confident self, a powerful self, a risk-taking self, a compassionate self (2002, p. 7).

For example, if a student adopts Heathcote's (1983) 'mantle of the expert' and responds 'as if' they are 'someone who knows', this imagining allows them see that this role has possibilities for them. The confidence that was experienced in the expert role can then be adopted

as part of their personal identity. I experienced this as I gradually took on the role of published writer for this thesis.

Role-play not only challenges participants' perceptions of others and themselves, but also their ability to act. In forum theatre Boal (1979) demonstrates how role-playing allows participants to imagine the multiple possibilities inherent in any scenario, and how problems of inequality can be tackled in many different ways. This form of imagining shows people how they can take action and change the situations they find themselves in. It is empowering.

Once role-play is re-positioned as a theatre arts strategy, a space opens up for imaginative learning in adult vocational education curricula. Role-play could provide a different, more humanising, educational experience, but it would be one that is also politically relevant for the twenty-first century. Neelands argues that:

In this new curriculum, concepts such as imagination and creativity will not be seen as 'soft' concepts but as core concepts. Core concepts that may lead to more creative and imaginative responses to the way we organise ourselves socially, economically, environmentally, and militarily (2002, p. 8).

September 11th 2001 has been used as the benchmark for signalling a new world order. It is a world dominated by the fear of terrorism and the use of military power to defeat terrorism. It is a world where empathy for 'others' such as refugees and Muslims is in short supply. If ever there was a time when it was necessary to argue for the inclusion of an arts approach in adult education, then that time must surely be

now. I have the imagination to believe that role-play could provide a means for this to happen.

Chapter 9.

The consequences of the research

Does this theory have legs? Or: How I put my theory into practice.

Theory without practice leads to empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to mindless activism (Zinn 1990, p. 42).

It is May 2004. I have to teach a session on 'How to give productive feedback' to a group of postgraduate adult educators/trainers who are students at my university. In the past I have used role-play as a strategy for getting students to practice giving feedback to each other. Most students are not very experienced in using this approach and some are quite reluctant to participate. I get them to work in groups of three. Two take on the role of giver and receiver of feedback, and the third

observes—taking notes on the interaction, and giving feedback to the participants afterwards.

The exercise is repeated until all the students in the group have had a chance to experience all three roles. The groups work simultaneously and privately. This makes the experience less confronting, but also makes it hard to evaluate exactly what is happening during the role-play.

In spite of these constraints, I believe this particular role-play has worked quite well in the past, encouraging the students to raise issues about what they perceive as constituting good and bad feedback. I have noticed, however, that one area of feedback that students often neglect to mention is the emotional reaction that can be experienced when negative feedback is given in an insensitive, unprofessional manner.

I decided that this year I wanted to find a way to get the students to focus more on the emotional elements of giving feedback. I chose to use what I had learnt from writing my dissertation to do this. This meant valuing role-play's special characteristics as a theatre arts strategy. If my research is to be more than an exercise in 'empty idealism', then theatre arts should provide me with an effective theoretical framework to help find a role-play approach to highlight the affective aspects of learning—but to do so in a way that is 'safe' for participants.

I decided to engage the students in a role-play activity, but to use a 'projective' technique (Landy 1994)—in this case a video clip—to distance them initially from the feedback experience. I chose a short video clip from a popular British comedy program entitled 'The Office' (Vol. 1.3). It showed a disastrous training session, part of which

involved a role-play exercise. Before watching the video, I told the group that Rowan, the trainer in the video, was so upset by the way this training session had turned out that he had asked them as 'expert' trainers to look at it and analyse where he had gone wrong. Their role was to provide him with timely and pertinent feedback on his training performance so he could avoid a similar disaster in the future.

The students watched the video clip in role as 'expert trainers'. The role chosen related closely to their experience as working trainers, and therefore should be one they could relate to and be able to get involved with. They had a clear purpose and were placed in a situation designed to engage them in their roles. However, I also included several distancing strategies in the role-play to help them retain some critical awareness of what they were experiencing. The video itself was one of the distancing strategies employed. As the training session was filmed—therefore not happening in what Bolton (2000) terms 'now time'—this meant the students could look at it with some detachment. The students had also been placed in a 'role frame' (Heathcote and Carroll 1986) that required them to adopt a critical, distanced stance.

Whilst a film or video presents experience filtered through a technical medium, it still has a strong projective power. That means that those who watch it can relate to the dramatic scenario presented both personally and emotionally. I had set up a situation where there was a deliberate tension between elements that would engage, and elements that would distance, students from the role-play experience. By doing this I hoped to create a situation where metaxis could occur and students could experience both being themselves and not themselves at the same time (Landy 1991).

After the video, I used a break to suspend the role-play (States 1985) and disengage students from their roles as training 'experts'. I told them that I would be leaving the room but when I returned and sat down on a chair I would take on the role of Rowan and would be looking for feedback from them on my disastrous training session. I also indicated that when I stood up from the chair and left the room the role-play would be over. I was careful to mark out the boundaries of the role-play so that it was clear when the students were expected to move into the imaginary world of 'as if' (Heathcote 1984) and when they were expected to leave it. The importance of marking the 'intentional space' of theatre and ritualising (Fox 1994) my entrance and exit in the role-play highlighted the artificial form of theatre. It reminded students that the role-play was a part of an imaginary dramatic construct rather than a slice of reality.

I came in and sat down and took on the role of Rowan the trainer, and thanked the panel of experts for taking the time to look at the video and give me feedback. I made it clear that I was aware that the videoed training session that they had just watched had been a disaster, and that I was feeling a bit sensitive about the experience.

The group of students 'adopted the mantle of the expert' (Heathcote 1984; Heathcote & Bolton 1995; Neelands 1991) with alacrity. They were clearly involved in the role-play and were taking their roles seriously. They began to give me some feedback on what I could do to improve my training performance. They helped me understand how I could improve my feedback skills. What they did not do was empathise with my situation or say anything positive about my performance until near the end of the interview. When the feedback session was over, I left the chair and the room and by doing so signaled the role-play had finished.

I chose to use the 'teacher-in-role' drama convention so that I could be part of the role-play but also a participant-observer of the students' feedback technique. I also knew that this convention allowed me to model and indicate what my expectations of role-play practice are. It also gave me the chance to revise and flesh out the details of the scenario and remind them of their roles and my expectations of how a role should be adopted and played. It is an engaging strategy, but also has a distancing element built in since I represent a character from the video, someone who has been looked at critically beforehand through the lens of film.

I used the 'mantle of the expert' approach, giving the students high status roles that were designed to build their confidence and make them more willing to take on the role. The roles chosen for the students were also generic, so they had room to interpret personally what kind of 'expert' trainer they would be.

When I returned I sat in a different place among the students, indicating a change in the group dynamic. This once again reinforced that there had been a move out of role and out of the 'significant space' of the drama into another sphere; this time that of the university classroom. In this setting we began to reflect on what had happened during the role-play and most importantly I was able to tell them how I felt as Rowan when I did not receive any positive feedback from the 'expert' team until so late in the session. I also expressed how strongly I needed to feel their empathetic support at the start of the session. I was at the same time able to model some of the principles of how to give feedback in a positive manner.

I was talking about the feelings I experienced at a remove, because they were Rowan's feelings, not mine, and this made it easier for me to express them and for the students to accept them. The students took an interest in the observations and acknowledged the emotional impact their feedback had generated. They began to talk about how they had felt giving feedback, and how they had felt receiving it in the past and why. The affective elements of giving feedback became the key focus of the role-play de-briefing session.

I also included in this de-briefing session a space to talk about role-play strategy in general. Rowan's calamitous attempt to facilitate a role-play on the video gave the students the opportunity to talk about role-play in this general manner, and offer ideas about what they considered good practice in this area. This provided students with a forum to compare what they had experienced as a role-play in class with what they considered to be good practice. Many had not experienced the teacher-role convention before, so there was time to consider the strengths and limitations of this approach as well.

I did not have time in this session to do as I had previously done, which was let the students experience receiving feedback themselves through a role-play. I see this in some respects as a disadvantage. However, I now felt that I had a theoretical framework that I could use to justify the approach I chose. That justification would be in terms of helping students engage in role-play in a way that had safety factors deliberately built into its design. This framework encouraged students to be involved in the role-play but to remain critical at the same time.

The participants may not have had the opportunity to experience aesthetic learning during this relatively short exercise, but I consciously

planned the session using aesthetic principles—with a particular focus on the principle of metaxis. For, as Bundy notes:

Aesthetic engagement always involves metaxis (2003, p. 180).

I also deliberately introduced the audience factor into this session so that the students were observing as well as participating. They watched Rowen in the video in role, and me in role, as I watched them in role, during the feedback session. I was clearly part of the role-play and not an invisible background observer of the dramatic action. This made the role-play less private and more confronting. Nevertheless, as there were other safety factors built into the role-play I felt it was possible to do this without alienating anyone.

I believe that theatre arts provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for thinking about role-play practice in adult education. This framework provides me with a rationale for the role-play strategies I use as a facilitator. Through its significant form role-play offers a variety of ways to both engage and distance participants from their dramatic experience. I am able to choose elements of dramatic form that encourage metaxis—a state of consciousness fundamental to the dramatic and aesthetic learning experience.

Theatre arts theory and drama-in-education and theatre practices gave me a range of choices in terms of how I should approach the learning situation described above, and I have indicated the ones I chose and why. It was not my only option however. I could have decided to introduce the topic through the convention of forum theatre and used theatre elements in quite a different way to achieve similar learning goals.

In the example described, I was also able to use theatre arts theory to evaluate the effectiveness of my session and think of ways it could have been improved. For example I could have asked my students to write a report to Rowan in their roles as experts, giving him suggestions as to how he might improve his practice. This would not only reinforce the learning that occurred during role-play, but allow students to think about how to develop written feedback and how this might differ from the verbal approach.

Most importantly, an appreciation and utilisation of theatre form allows me to value the affective aspects of learning in a manner that is safe for both the students and myself. Re-positioning role-play as theatre arts strategy in adult education has provided answers to the questions that drove my research, and also revealed a rich source of literature that continues to interrogate and challenge the practice of role-play as a learning approach in adult education.

How can my research be of use to other adult educators?

I have demonstrated how positioning role-play in theatre arts provides me with a coherent theoretical framework for using role-play as a learning strategy in adult education. But it would seem logical that I would find this approach a comfortable one to employ because I am a drama specialist who has taught theatre arts in the past. The question that has to be asked is 'What relevance does my research have for the majority of adult educators who use or want to use role-play in their teaching *but have little or no background in drama and theatre arts?*'

I would argue that it is necessary to have a full understanding of the theatre arts approach for it to work effectively as a framework for role-play practice. Accordingly, this understanding should be included in any Adult Education training curriculum. There are, however, some general principles that can be drawn from this research and these might guide non-drama specialists in their use of role-play.

One theoretical principle relating to role-play as a theatre arts strategy that I would want everyone to understand is the concept of metaxis.

A key objective for facilitators to get participants to achieve in role-play is the condition of metaxis—the state of consciousness that can occur when participants engage in an act of the imagination such as they do in a role-play event. During metaxis participants experience the concurrent awareness of being in role but also having a sense of detachment from it. When conducting a role-play there needs to be space for participants to be aware of this process—being engaged in, yet also critically disengaged from, the drama.

The following list provides some pointers for role-play practice. They are based on the findings of this research and on the premise that role-play is a theatre arts strategy. However, they are also designed to be helpful to non-specialist adult educators.

Pointers for role play practice in education

- Give participants some choice when setting up the role-play. Let them use their collective experience as a starting point. This could be done using the Still Pictures convention to find out

what their understanding of a particular topic might be, or through a forum theatre approach (Boal 1992, 1993).

- Avoid using detailed, prepared, role-cards, over-complicated scenario descriptions, or pre-scripted role-plays. These restrict participant choice and can make them feel trapped in a role. Generic roles such as trainer, manager or interviewer allow participants to interpret those roles according to their personal experience. They can then find their level of comfort in that role. Over-structuring a role-play will also stifle its improvisational nature. Extra information regarding the role-play should be given as 'real documents' that are needed by the role-players in their scenario (such as in the Watergate example).
- It is important to mark out the space where the role-play occurs so that it is given a special significance. This might be achieved through the deliberate placing of a table and two chairs in a space, and asking the learners to look at them because this space is now going to represent an interview room. Alternatively, the facilitator might mark out the space physically by getting participants to set up the scene and place furniture and props where they think they would have maximum dramatic potential. There could be a ritualistic marking out of the scene being created by the facilitator. Or they could give verbal cues about when the drama is to begin and end. For example, the facilitator says that when a participant is sitting in a chair they will be in role, and when the participant gets up and moves away from the chair they will step out of role and return to being themselves.

The space has to be acknowledged by the group as 'fictional space'. That means it is a place that operates differently from the realities of the classroom or training area. The clear delineation of space sets it apart and gives it peculiarity. It demands that it be looked at or engaged with in a special way.

- Use a small selection of props—such as a briefcase or a folder—to help learners get into role. The removal of these items also signal that the role-play is over.
- Use ritual to emphasise the difference between the world of the imaginary (the 'as if') and the 'real world'. This can be achieved through the facilitator making verbal instructions and non-verbal movements and gestures more deliberate. For example the facilitator might say, "We are now going to begin the role-play and it will take place in this space" (walks around the space clearly showing its boundaries). The use of pause and repetition can also add to the ritualistic elements of role-play.
- It can be beneficial at times to suspend a role-play. That is because its theatre form has the strength to keep up the momentum of the drama even if it is frozen. Interruptions can heighten the dramatic tension, as well as providing a space for the participants to step outside the drama to look at it as an audience might, and critique it.
- 'Now time' is not always the 'best' time. When a role-play operates in 'now time' (that is, as if the action is happening at this very moment) then it mirrors 'reality' more closely. This makes it harder for participants to differentiate the fictional

from the real. They may become so involved in the drama that they forget that they are responding 'as if' they were themselves or another person in some other situation. It allows them to believe they are experiencing the situation as themselves in reality. Participants can fail to recognise the artificial theatre form of role-play and be unable to maintain the critical distance required.

- Using past time, future time, or techniques that slow down time can all help emphasise role-play's significant theatre form and help promote a state of metaxis.
- Describing what is happening through a third person—who narrates what is happening or gets the participants to describe what they are doing in the third person (as suggested by Bolton 2000)—could help the participants prepare for, or critically distance themselves from, an emotionally-charged role-play.
- Include spaces in the role-play where participants can become an audience. This can be achieved through the use of 'Still Pictures' or 'A Photographed Moment' (Neelands 1991, Owens and Barber 1997). Also encourage the use of roles that involve participants in critical viewing—such as reporters, scientists or investigators. Provide opportunities for looking at and reflecting on what has been happening in the role-play.
- Use video, photographs or objects as a stimulus for role-play work. Get participants to view a situation through these media. Encourage the use of projection in role-play work.

- As a facilitator, take on a role yourself. This way you can model good practice, shape the event, and be an involved yet critical observer of what occurs.
- Use Heathcote's 'mantle of the expert' approach and put participants in expert roles (refer to the feedback session example earlier in this chapter). This encourages participants to perform 'as if' they were highly skilled, and can raise the level of participant confidence and ability within the role-play.
- Capitalise on role-play's ability to present alternative views or perspectives. Use techniques (from Neelands 1991 Conventions) such as role-reversal or forum theatre to explore difference and to challenge entrenched habits of perception.
- Become familiar with and use, and help participants use, the key elements of dramatic form – tension, focus, surprise, contrast and symbolization.
- Become familiar with the dramatic conventions (see Chapter 6). Learn this dramatic language and use it to add variety and complexity to role-play work. Encourage students to become familiar with this language too, so they can eventually determine the form a role-play could take.
- Do not see de-briefing as something that has to happen after the role-play is finished. Get participants to reflect in role as well as out of role.

- Use the reflective conventions such as 'thought tracking' (Neelands 1991) to de-brief participants during the role-play action.
- Get participants to write, design plans, make maps etc. when they are in role and use these to evaluate what has been learnt in the role-play session. Remember that writing in 'the mantle of the expert' role can help participants gain confidence in using different writing genres, and gives this writing a purpose and an audience that is often lacking in an academic context.

What difference has this research made to the field? How has it moved things forward?

One of the key aims of this research has been to make a contribution to the way role-play is theorized as a learning strategy in adult education. I have used theatre arts theory and ideas from related areas to do this, and argued that role-play can be usefully defined as a theatre arts strategy.

Whilst some writers (Van Ments 1983; Saunders 1986; Christopher 1984) have recognised that there are links between role-play and theatre arts, none have suggested that role-play should be primarily positioned as a theatre arts strategy. I contend, however, that theatre arts and related areas can provide a coherent theoretical framework for the facilitation of role-play in adult education. Those disciplines can provide answers to problems that were unable to be handled when role-play was located within simulation and gaming.

This research is also concerned with practice. I have been searching for an alternative theoretical framework to solve the practical problems that I experienced myself as an adult educator when using role-play as a learning strategy. The key question that initiated and drove my thesis was how to manage the level of involvement or distance that participants experience during a role-play. Theatre arts theory provided answers to this question. An understanding of theatre art form and the aesthetic enabled me to appreciate how form can be manipulated to bring about a state of metaxis. This state of consciousness allows participants to find a balance between their involvement in the fictional world of role-play and the 'real' world, and make meaningful connections between the two. An appreciation of theatre form allowed me to understand how it can be used to engage and disengage students from the role-play.

Dramatherapy literature also provided answers to this key question of how to engage and disengage participants from a role-play. The concept of projection, and those of under-distancing and over-distancing, provided insights into how personal experience can be filtered and distanced through objects and media such as video and photographs.

These are just a few examples of how theatre arts theory can offer new ways of thinking about issues of engagement and disengagement in role-play, as well as providing strategies that can be used to enhance role-play practice.

Theatre arts and dramatherapy both acknowledge the importance of the emotions in learning. The aesthetic experience "arrests the whole

being—the mind, the feelings and the imagination” (Bundy 2003, p. 172).

Dramatherapy is concerned with healing, and the emotions play a crucial part in that process. Concepts of metaxis and projection help us understand how emotions can be valued yet safeguarded through the theatre arts learning process. These concepts provide frameworks for deciding how best to involve and detach participants from a role-play situation, and how to manage the level of emotional engagement that takes place.

I also believe such strategies help a facilitator act more ethically, by reducing the possibilities of causing harm (whether by intention or neglect) to their students.

The problems I experienced—and which motivated me to write this thesis—are often given as reasons for not using role-play in adult education. I hope this research will both contribute to the debate on the value of role-play as a learning strategy, and encourage more adult educators to use it as a learning tool. I would be pleased if those who use role-play could come to feel that they have more understanding and control over how they use the technique, and be clearer about its potential as a tool for learning.

Once role-play is aligned to theatre arts then there is the opportunity to engage in aesthetic learning. This allows for a different way of perceiving and apprehending the world. It transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. Role-play’s transformational quality has strong links to Mezirow’s (1990) transformative learning theory. I have demonstrated how role-play can stimulate a change in perception. This

connection between Mezirow's transformative learning approach and role-play has not been made strongly before, either in the adult education or the drama-in-education literatures.

Finally, I have argued that there is a lack of an arts approach to learning in adult education, and that role-play is well positioned to redress this imbalance. Role-play as an art form can offer a unique form of learning—imaginative learning. Whitehead (1929) argues that even the function of any university:

...is the imaginative acquisition of knowledge. Apart from the importance of the imagination, there is no reason why businessmen {sic}, should not pick up their facts bit by bit as they want them for particular occasions. A university is imaginative or it is nothing (1929 p. 96).

There is a danger that if the arts are absent from universities—and from adult education as a whole—that the imaginative aspect of learning could be overlooked. Role-play, as I have conceptualised it as an arts learning strategy, presents the opportunity to put the art and the imagination back into adult education.

I am not suggesting that the only place for role-play in adult education is to use it theatre arts strategy. Nor do I suggest that other approaches to role-play have no value. On the contrary I am saying is that the theatre arts approach provides a more conceptually complete framework for understanding how role-play operates than any other currently available. Appreciating that role-play has the potential to be a theatre arts strategy allows both facilitators and students to manipulate its form in a way that maximises learning and promotes safety. Role-

play as an arts strategy also places value on the improvisation. This means that students have to respond creatively to the role-play scenario and rise to the challenge of not knowing exactly what will happen next. They can 'play' with ideas and behaviours in a safe context, and then examine the implications of what they and others have done.

I would also argue that when role-play is employed as an arts strategy it becomes an exquisite learning tool—rather like the cricket bat referred to by Henry, a character in Stoppard's play 'The Real Thing'. Henry uses the cricket bat as a metaphor for good writing.

Henry: (He goes out and returns with an old cricket bat)

Shut up and listen. This thing here, which looks like a wooden club, is actually several pieces of particular wood cunningly put together in a certain way so that the whole thing is sprung, like a dance floor. It's for hitting cricket balls with. If you get it right, the cricket ball will travel two hundred yards in four seconds, and all you've done is give it a knock like knocking the top off a bottle of stout, and it makes a noise like a trout taking a fly... (He clucks his tongue to make the noise.) What we are trying to do is write cricket bats, so that when we throw up an idea and give it a little knock, it might *travel*... (He clucks his tongue again and picks up the script.) Now, what we've got here is a lump of wood of roughly the same shape trying to be a cricket bat, and if you hit a ball with it, the ball will travel about ten feet and you will drop the bat and dance about shouting 'Ouch' with your hands stuck under your armpits. (Indicating the cricket bat) This isn't better because someone says it's better, or

because there's a conspiracy by the MCC to keep cudgels out of Lords. It's better because it's better. You don't believe me, so I suggest you go out and bat with this and see how you get on (1999, p. 205).

Part of what makes the cricket bat a more attractive option than the cudgel is its unique form. Once role-play is positioned as a theatre arts learning strategy, it has a carefully honed shape and form. Once we have grasped the key elements of this form we are then in a position to use it as a tool to hit sixes for adult learning!

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Appendix 1

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In someone else's shoes

BY KATE COLLIER



'IT JUST DOESN'T WORK', is the familiar complaint from lecturers embarking on role play exercises on Youth Training Schemes and BTEC courses. This reflects the need for a clear clarification of the methods and an identification of the difference between role play and acting. If the latter is stressed there is a danger of alienating those students who automatically believe that they can't act. If those students who have the confidence to perform in front of others are chosen, the whole purpose of the exercise is devalued and student experience is restricted to a minority of the class. The most useful approach is one where role play is presented as a skill common to everyone.

Discussion of the different roles students play in everyday life, for example, student, friend, interview candidate, can help emphasise the normality of this process rather than its artificiality. Certain points should emerge from this discussion.

- Everyone changes their language and behaviour according to the situations they are in.
- It's a natural social function that does not involve acting skills in the theatrical sense of the term.

Once students realise that role play is something everyone can do successfully, it is easier to move onto the next stage where students are required to react 'as if' they had a particular status within a given situation. 'As if' is a key phrase for defining what role play entails. It stresses the reality of the exercise rather than the pretence. Only when students can believe in the situation can they fully appreciate its learning possibilities. This article shows that role play can work and has a useful function to perform as a teaching method.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

For many students active classroom participation has not been a regular feature of their educational experience. It is therefore not surprising that role play is often viewed suspiciously by students. They are sometimes reluctant to take the risks involved in doing this kind of exercise. It is vital that tutors embarking on role play for the first time, ensure that the class feels secure and unthreatened. This can be achieved in the following ways by:

- Making sure that students understand what is involved in a role play exercise, stressing normality rather than artificiality.
- Ensuring the exercise is relevant, believable and that sufficient background is given verbally or on role-cards.
- Careful structuring of the exercises, so that

students are given familiar tasks to perform before moving on to the less familiar.

- Active teacher participation in the exercise; this may include a change of status.
- Selective group organization: moving from working in pairs, to group work, to TV monitoring.

THE STARTING POINT

Paired work is often the easiest starting point for role play. Students can work from their desks or move minimally, causing as little disruption as possible to the familiar lesson format. Each pair is divided into A or B and the tutor gives simple verbal instructions on the roles to be played and the problem to be solved. Situations should at first be fairly straightforward, for example:

A is a receptionist at a small hotel. Business has not been good and it is especially important that guests are kept happy.

B is a guest at this hotel and arrives to find his/her room has not been properly cleaned and that there are dirty towels in the bathroom.

The whole group should be involved in the exercise and the role plays occur concurrently. Initially exercises should not last too long, three or four minutes can be sufficient. As students become more familiar with this method, the exercises can be extended. At first it is more important that students participate and do not feel they are performing in front of an audience or being judged. Once the exercises are concluded the tutor can evaluate student learning by questioning them on their experiences: 'Did anyone manage to resolve the situation?' 'How was that achieved?'

In this way skills can be analysed and developed. Students can then change roles and repeat the exercise in the light of the discussion. This has the added advantage of allowing students to experience both sides of the argument and leads to a more objective assessment of the situation.

ASSESSING DEVELOPMENTS

When students are familiar with this format, the tutor can then introduce the 'beaming in' technique. This allows for pauses in the group activities whilst the tutor focuses briefly on a particular pair of students. The rest of the group freeze their action and watch the chosen pair. The

Role play can work and has a useful function to perform as a teaching method."

time they are under scrutiny should be counted in seconds rather than minutes and then group work assessed or another pair highlighted. The 'beaming' exercise should help the tutor pinpoint particular student development and use this to draw out general learning points that will help the group as a whole.

COMPLEX EXERCISES

Once students feel secure participating in these kinds of role play exercises, it should be easier to introduce more complex and challenging strategies. These usually involve role-cards which give specific details about the background to a role, and sometimes include attitudes as well. Details of a particular situation and the problems that need to be solved within it, can also be put in the same card given out separately on an instruction card. When creating role-cards a tutor should ensure that:

- Learning aims are built into the instructions; these will determine the kind of problem that is set and the roles and situations that are chosen.
- The aims and roles chosen are realistic and relevant to the students' needs.
- The cards are clearly presented; sometimes numbered points or separate headings can pinpoint the information that needs to be absorbed by the student.
- The cards are not overloaded with information; they are a stimulus and not a prop. Allow room for the students to interpret the information.

PREPARING THE STUDENT

Before embarking on these more complex exercises it can be helpful to briefly discuss the general area being investigated. This allows a tutor to establish how much students know or remember about the topic and helps to stimulate interest in it. Once role-cards have been given out it is important to allow students time to work on their roles. If a student is unprepared, there is a stronger likelihood of superficial involvement in the exercise, sometimes leading to deliberate daydreaming. If tutors feel students are sending up the role play it is important to remind students of the basis of role play work, stressing the reality and relevance.

It is important to remember that if the tutor adopts a controlling role within the action, the students will have less chance to take responsibility and solve problems for themselves.

The evaluation of a role play exercise is a vital part of the method and sufficient time must be allowed for this process. The tutor through open questioning can encourage students to describe their experiences and then analyse what they have learnt from them. Later, when students feel wholly secure with the method, their work can be televised and analysed in even more detail. A really successful exercise should make the students feel that they have had a credible experience.

ROLE CARD EXAMPLE

Background

Name: Jenny Robson

Age: 36

Situation: Married with two children aged 8 and 10. Husband has been unemployed for two years. Your family is in financial difficulties.

Attitudes:

You are an active member of the Transport and General Workers Union, and believe:

- 1 That it may be necessary to take strike action to get an increase in pay for the workforce.
- 2 That the management wants to make 20 workers redundant to cut costs. You are against this policy.

Situation

You are an employee at the Oxford Factory and part of the Union negotiating team. The Union has put forward a claim for a 10% pay increase backdated to April 1985, and is at present involved in negotiations with the management.

THE ADVANTAGES

Role play exercises give students the chance to simulate a variety of situations within the relative safety of the classroom. Its framework not only provides an opportunity for business knowledge to be put into a practical context but also develops social skills. Speech and body language patterns can be analysed and help students develop confidence in their dealings with people. In addition role play provides opportunities for students to work in groups using their collective experience to solve problems independently from the teacher. Not least it can provide students with an enjoyable learning experience and allows tutors to bring extra flexibility and variety to their teaching method.

There are areas that obviously lend themselves to role play in Business Studies, such as Industrial Relations, Marketing, Personnel Management, Secretarial and Receptionist skills. There is also an increasing emphasis on teaching commercial subjects in a practical context in the rapidly developing vocational courses, especially in the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education. Consultative documents and syllabuses stress 'integral and active learning',¹ and the need for students to be involved in problem solving activities including negotiation and decision making. It has been claimed that 'CPVE is about doing'²; if this is the case then role play must be acknowledged as part of the action. ■

¹ The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education Consultative Document. B/TEC

² A Practical Approach to CPVE — Experiences from the Southend Pilot Scheme. (Occasional ALE Publication)

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"Role play develops social skills"

Chapter 16

Once more with feeling – identification, representation and the affective aspects of role play in experience-based education

Kate Collier

ABSTRACT

Because role play has the potential to mirror 'real life' so precisely, participants can identify strongly with the roles they adopt. This sometimes leads to the triggering of strong emotions that can be hard for both the participant and facilitator to deal with during a training/teaching session. Most facilitators do not see their role as being that of a therapist, and this can be a deterrent to using role play techniques.

This chapter will argue that the emphasis on identification in role play, and the need for the technique to mirror workplace contexts or real life situations, has devalued this approach to learning. It is therefore necessary to examine the potential of representational techniques and the use of symbolic form to help distance participants from the role play situation, so they can reflect more critically on their experience.

I will explore some of the uses of representation in theatre and drama-in-education in order to see whether their techniques can inform and further develop role play theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Role play is an established experience based learning approach that has been used in adult education and training for many years. It is seen by experience-based practitioners as a particularly powerful strategy because it taps so strongly into human experience and can create learning events that are as varied as life itself. It does this in its simplest form by asking someone to imagine that they are themselves or another person in a particular situation (van Ments, 1983). This, as Landy (1991) points out, encourages participants to function on two levels of reality: that of the everyday and the imaginative. The combining of these two elements allows role players to respond 'as if' they were in a given situation, speculate how they would

respond at that moment of time and therefore feel what it might be like for them in reality.

Role play, therefore, can be seen as one of the purest forms of experiential learning and conforms to all the principles of this approach as outlined by Boud *et al.* (1993). Its ability to recreate a form of reality means that participants are encouraged to use their experience as the foundation and stimulus for learning; its imaginative aspect allows role players the opportunity to distance themselves from the experience and reflect upon it in order to create new meaning. Learning is contextualized and therefore reflects social and cultural influences, whilst the dynamic nature of the strategy and the response of the participant to the situation and the people within it encourage a holistic approach to learning. The possibility of engaging the whole person mentally, physically and emotionally in the educational process is viewed as a particular strength of experience-based education. Boud *et al.* (1993) reinforce the concept that:

'ideas are not separate from experience, learning is not unrelated to relationships and personal interests and emotions and feelings have a vital role to play in what we later come to identify as intellectual learning.'

WHY IS ROLE PLAY A PROBLEM?

This emotional aspect of learning which role play so effectively utilizes can also be perceived as a dangerous area which can lead to a facilitator losing control over the learning situation. It is most usually when strong feelings arise in role play events that the learning appears to lose direction and has a detrimental effect on both the facilitator and participants. Jones (1997) gives examples of role play activities within a game and simulation situation, where participants refuse to speak or work with each other afterwards; friendships are destroyed and work relationships marred forever. This in turn means that the facilitator loses credibility and the approach is discredited.

Experiences such as these could explain why role play seems to be perceived by many of the adult educators that I teach as something to avoid both in terms of personal participation and as a potential training strategy in their fields of work. Why then is role play so problematic and can it be fully utilized in a way that allows participants to learn positively from the rich experiences that it offers as a teaching approach?

In this chapter I will identify specific problems that facilitators and participants have encountered when using role play and assess some of the ideas that have been put forward by important theorists and practitioners in this field (van Ments, 1992; Jones, 1994, 1997). I will then begin to explore an alternative view that argues that role play needs to return to its theatrical roots in order to be used effectively as an experience-based learning strategy. I propose that a better understanding of the principles of theatre as an art form and the place of role within this field will allow practitioners to utilize fully the affective learning potential of role play, rather than seeing it as a potential problem area.

SOME EXAMPLES OF ROLE PLAY PROBLEMS

Jones (1997) gives some detailed examples of role playing disasters; the ones he refers to are situated within certain games or simulations. In the game 'PRISONERS' DILEMMA' two prisoners are jointly accused of an unspecified crime. They have to decide separately whether to plead guilty or not guilty to this crime and are not allowed to consult each other during this process. If they both plead not guilty they receive a lesser sentence than if they both plead guilty. However, if they plead differently, the person who pleaded guilty will receive a lighter sentence (because they have become a police informant) while the person pleading not guilty receives a heavier sentence.

Participants in this game became very involved in their roles. They used emotional blackmail to keep fellow prisoners 'in line' and refused to speak to or participate further with the 'sons of bitches who double-crossed them' during the game. The feelings of aggression that the game engendered affected personal relationships outside the learning experience, with participants who had been friends refusing to speak to each other and some blaming the facilitator for setting up such a volatile situation for the group. In terms of the learning that emerged from role playing prisoners in the game, it appears that participants discovered how to dislike each other and how to carry this hatred with them from the imaginative to the real world.

Jones (1997) gives other examples of participants in games or simulations who identify so strongly with their role that they are prepared to engage in the kind of antisocial behaviour that alienates them from the group they are working with. In one such incident participants involved in the trading game 'STARPOWER' resorted to physical violence in order to assert their power and gain maximum trading advantage over their partners. The rules of this exercise actually encourage this kind of ruthless competitive behaviour as one group (the most successful traders) are allowed to determine the rules of the game after a period of time. The idea is to highlight how those in power can oppress others to gain further advantage. In this case, however, there was a real danger that participants could have physically harmed each other and were engaged in a battle that went far beyond the bounds of the simulation.

There is, however, according to Jones (1997) an explanation for these disasters. The problem that he identifies is one to do with the structure of the exercises. The examples that are given are neither a pure game nor a simulation but an unhealthy mismatch of the two: a simulation/game. For Jones,

'games and simulations are incompatible because the motives (duties, responsibilities and ethics) are incompatible. In games (of skill) the players have a duty to try and win. In simulations the participants have a duty to fulfil their roles (functions, jobs) to the best of their ability, having regard to circumstances and ethics of the real world.'

The clash of these different value systems within the one exercise provokes a strong emotional reaction in participants and results in confusion as to what the purpose of the exercise may be.

Jones (1997) has identified an important factor that can influence the success or failure of particular simulation or gaming events. It is important to recognize, how-

ever, that strong emotions can be engendered in any role play situation because of the experiential nature of this learning approach. Van Ments (1996) suggests that problems can arise in role play exercises because of 'the imaginative and emotional strains' which are imposed on role players as they creatively respond to a given situation. If this is the case then what other factors influence the emotional pitch of a role play, and how can these be dealt with effectively? I suggest that issues of identification and representation are pertinent to an understanding of the affective elements of role play learning.

It is interesting that Jones does not focus on the problem of participants identifying too strongly with their role within a game or simulation, although this appears to be a crucial element in the situations described. Strong identification with a role usually leads to a strong emotional involvement and whilst it has been acknowledged that role play offers the potential for the engagement of the emotions in learning, it seems that when this happens there is a feeling of loss of control among participants and by the facilitator. The extreme solution that Jones (1994) proposes for the kind of experience he outlines above is to refuse to use them in a learning situation: to boycott them completely. Alternatively he suggests that if these simulation/games are really seen to be valuable and have to be used, then the facilitator during the debriefing needs to explain the 'ambivalents' (sic) inherent in these events and apologise for any upset that may be caused to participants.

Van Ments (1992) appears equally uncomfortable with role play situations where the emotions are particularly strong. His suggestions for dealing with them are almost as extreme as those of Jones. Van Ments first proposes that a role play should be interrupted if the emotional temperature is getting too high. If this proves impossible because emotions have reached 'boiling point' then 'the tutor should ask themselves whether they are running an educational simulation, or a therapeutic session where participants are working through their anxieties and emotions'. This seems to be another example of a situation where participants have identified so strongly with the roles they are playing that the fine line between fiction and reality is blurred and there is scope for the experience to be personally damaging.

I am not convinced by either of these approaches to the problem of dealing with the affective elements of role play. It seems to me that the difficulties experienced by participants in the examples given are the result of role play having been cut off from its theatrical roots. This has led to a confusion between issues of identification and representation within this educational approach. I will argue that a misunderstanding of these elements of dramatic form is at the heart of role play disasters.

GOING BACK TO ROLE PLAY'S THEATRICAL ROOTS

Role play has been defined within experience based education as being something that is separate from acting and theatrical performance. Whilst it is acknowledged (van Ments, 1983) that the origin of the concept of role refers to the roll of parchment that an actor's script was written on and now has come to be understood as

'an actor's part in a drama', role play is described as 'a repertoire of behaviours'. Van Ments emphasises that the two should not be confused:

'The essential difference is that acting consists of bringing to life a dramatist's ideas (or one's own ideas) in order to influence and entertain an audience, whereas role-play is the experiencing of a problem under an unfamiliar set of constraints in order that one's own ideas may emerge and one's understanding increase.'

The only 'acting out' required of the role player is what would be expected of them in any situation they may encounter in everyday life. The focus is on the function and purpose of the role being played rather than the use of the voice and the body to project a character; the role player performs for themselves and fellow role players, not for an audience.

Whilst I would agree that role playing does not require the kind of performance skills expected of professional actors, I do think it would benefit from facilitators and participants having an understanding of the principles of dramatic form. If role play is severed from its dramatic roots there is a danger that it will be reduced to the practice of a 'repertoire of behaviours', that have predictable, observable outcomes: an example of instrumental rather than experiential education. This approach not only limits its learning potential but can lead to a misunderstanding of how to use the strategy successfully and eventually to the kind of problems outlined by Jones (1994, 1997). Jennings (1991) highlights the dangers of setting role play apart from drama. She proposes that the recreation of a real life situation within a role play inevitably involves the engagement of the dramatic imagination. It is not dealing with reality but a recreation of reality, therefore 'a basic knowledge of dramatic structure and the separate, but overlapping worlds of everyday reality and dramatic reality are essential for good practice'.

Jennings' perspective on role play as an 'act of the dramatic imagination' rather than a recreation of reality, is reinforced by the theory and practice of drama-in-education specialists such as Heathcote (1984), Neelands (1991, 1992), O'Toole (1992), Bolton (1979, 1992), Bolton and Heathcote (1996), O'Neil (1995). This educational approach has much in common with the way role play is approached in experience-based education. It uses drama strategies, including role play, as a means of helping students learn more about curricular content as well as developing their interpersonal and cognitive skills. Drama-in-education primarily involves everyone in the action and does not usually function with an audience watching dramatic performances including role play presentations. Participants respond spontaneously to the dramatic situations they create or are given, so scripts are not necessary. It does, however, use an understanding of dramatic form and theatre as an art form as the underpinning for its practice. This suggests that elements of dramatic form and role play in experience-based education are not incompatible but can be harnessed to provide a solid foundation for educational practice.

The two elements of theatre art form that I see as being particularly pertinent to the use of role play in experience-based education are those of 'identification' and 'representation'. It is the balanced combination of these two elements that produces 'metaxis', a situation where participants feel simultaneously involved and detached from the dramatic situation they experience. I will limit my exploration

of the links between theatre arts theory and role play in experience-based education to an examination of the relevance of these ideas to role play theory and practice, with particular reference to the facilitation of affective learning.

Bolton (1992) observes that drama is 'the one art form that looks like what is going on in real life'. Consequently there is a danger that its imitative qualities will be emphasized and participants engaged in trying to mirror real life as precisely as possible. This in turn may encourage them to identify closely with roles they are playing within dramatic situations and can lead to strong emotional involvement in these roles. Whilst imitation is an important component of drama, it is only one feature of this approach. The other key element of dramatic form is representation. This refers to the symbolic or metaphoric aspects of drama: the conscious artifice of dramatic form. Representation functions as a means of detaching participants from the action and allows them to reflect and analyse dramatic situations. It relates directly to the imaginative qualities of role that Jennings (1991) identified in role play activities. Bolton (1992) notes that:

'While we have established that there is a basic connection between making a "real-life" social event and making such an event in make believe, there must also be a sense of using form to make ordinary events significant.'

I suggest that role play in experience-based education relies too heavily on imitating 'real life' situations and therefore does not capitalize on the symbolic levels of learning that are inherent in this approach. This means that participants get lost in the 'reality' of the situation and lose the critical capacity which comes through developing an understanding of symbolic form. This failure to understand the representational nature of role play helps to explain the problematic emotional outbursts in role play activities where participants have become too closely identified with their fictional role and are unable to disengage from it. Attention to elements of dramatic form will help participants gain a more objective insight into the emotions they are experiencing and offers a means to express their understanding of the affective aspects of the learning experience.

THE IMPORTANCE OF METAXIS

Central to an understanding of role as a part of theatre form is the concept of 'metaxis'. This describes the paradoxical nature of role playing and how during it a participant is involved both in engagement and separation processes. Landy (1991) explains metaxis as the experience participants have of 'simultaneously existing in the two realities of me and the not me', whilst Bolton (1992) describes it in terms of participants having a 'a dual awareness of the "real" and "fictitious" worlds' when playing a role. Here is an example of how the dramatic elements of representation and identification can create a positive learning tension: the emotion is experienced through the person's involvement in the role but is also seen as part of an imaginary process that is not real and can be analysed further.

It is the use of theatre form that stresses that role play is part of an imaginary process rather than an experience of reality. It is this that helps the participants dis-

engage from their role and 'where the meaning of an event is partially encapsulated' (Bolton, 1992).

How then is it possible to include elements of dramatic form into role play activities in experience-based education? How can participants be encouraged to experience metaxis so they can have a sense of control over the learning process, in particular its affective elements?

These are complex questions that this chapter cannot fully address. I will therefore restrict my discussion of the potential for using theatre form in role play activities in experience-based education to aspects of one drama-in-education model. I will argue that elements of the approach presented by Neelands (1991) offer facilitators and participants of role play a greater understanding of the learning potential of this experiential strategy.

USING THEATRE FORM IN ROLE PLAY

Neelands' (1991) approach is based on the understanding that theatre is 'the direct experience that is shared when people behave as if they were other than themselves in some other place at another time'; it is a definition that aligns itself closely to that of role play in experience-based education. Meaning is created for those involved in this creative process through the participants' 'fictional and symbolic uses of human presence in time and space'. The symbolic use of objects, light and sound can be used as an enhanced means of communicating understanding. The relationships between these different elements at different stages of the theatrical process are identified as 'dramatic conventions' by Neelands.

It is these dramatic conventions that provide a framework for drama-in-education practice; they could also provide the basis for a more informed approach to role play in experience-based education.

It is interesting to note that Neelands (1991) sees the use of dramatic conventions as a means of engaging participants in an interactive learning approach that involves a fusion of the roles of spectator and actor rather than encouraging an actor or spectator approach. This perspective is compatible therefore with van Ments' (1983) definition of a role play activity. The conventions have an educative function and are designed to help participants develop a deeper understanding of human experience; however they also respond to the 'basic human need to interpret and express the world through symbolic form'. This symbolic level of learning relates to the representational dimensions of the dramatic process and provides the distancing elements within the role play experience.

Four groups of dramatic conventions are identified and each has a different function to perform within the dramatic learning process. The first, 'context-build-ing action', includes strategies that 'set the scene' for a dramatic event; their function is to make the context more credible for participants. An example of this is the 'defining space' convention where 'available material and furniture is used to "accurately" represent the place where a drama is happening'. The second group-ing, 'narrative action', emphasizes conventions that drive the dramatic story forward and includes strategies such as meetings, interviews and interrogations.

These first two groups of conventions are designed to help participants engage in the drama and build belief through identification with a particular role or situation. They encourage action and give the scene its dramatic momentum.

The last two groupings, 'poetic action' and 'reflective action', are designed to slow the drama down and move it onto a more abstract, representational level which in turn encourages participants to analyse the dramatic action – to detach themselves from the drama. 'Poetic action', through its highly selective use of language and gesture, capitalizes on the symbolic potential of dramatic form; examples of this approach would be the use of ritual and analogy in drama. The last convention groupings, 'reflective action', focuses on the 'inner thinking' of the drama, allowing individuals or groups to 'review the drama from within the dramatic context' and consider the significance of the action that has taken place. These convention groupings therefore provide a means for controlling the engagement and disengagement of participants in their roles within the drama and provide a positive environment for the development of a state of metaxis. They also provide a coherent overall structure for using dramatic form in role play activities.

Let us consider how one of the strategies from the last convention grouping may be used to help emotionally distance participants from the role they are playing in a role play activity. The convention is called 'thought tracking' and has been chosen because its reflective form encourages participants to consider feelings and actions that have occurred within the role play exercise. The convention enables participants-in-role to pause during the action and publicly reveal their private thoughts and responses at specific moments in the action. This allows participants to contrast the spoken thought processes with the actions that have taken place during the role play. Neelands (1991) points out that this convention, this use of dramatic form, requires reflection and analysis of a situation and role; 'hearing other thoughts generates a sensitive/feeling response to the content (and) action is slowed down to allow for a deeper understanding of meanings underlying action'.

Neelands' dramatic conventions offer participants and facilitators the opportunity to use theatrical form consciously to learn through role play. They provide the opportunity for both involvement and identification with any role being played as well as a detachment from it so reflection on meaning can occur. This in turn can encourage the development of metaxis or the presence in role play of the 'self spectator'. Shillingford (1994) describes this as involving 'the presence of an internal "other"' and generating the important process of 'reflection-in-action; reflection that is ongoing as the event occurs'. The self-spectator dimension that is developed through the employment of dramatic form allows the affective elements of role play to be used constructively and prevents the descent of participants into an emotional quagmire that alienates role players from each other and the strategy itself.

CONCLUSION

I have argued in this chapter that the problems that are often encountered in role play activities, especially those that involve the affective elements inherent in this

approach, are caused by the separation of role play from its theatre roots. An understanding of theatrical form, especially the concepts of identification, representation and metaxis, allows participants and facilitators to use role play in a way that ensures that participants are involved yet also able to be critically detached from the roles that they play. This means that the emotional involvement of participants need not be viewed as 'the most difficult thing to handle during the running of a role-play' (van Ments, 1996) but as an important enriching element of this experiential strategy.

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Chapter 18

Finding a 'forum' for debriefing role-play in adult education

Kate Collier

ABSTRACT

I have argued elsewhere (Collier, 1998) that role-play practice can be enhanced through a full appreciation of its connections with theatre arts theory. This allows for an understanding of how the use of dramatic form can enrich role-play activities, especially in terms of utilising the symbolic, imaginative potential inherent in this strategy.

This chapter examines different de-briefing practices that are used in role-play at present. It then explores how an understanding of the theory and practice of the Brazilian community theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, can add a new dimension to the de-briefing of role-play. It focuses particularly on Boal's use of 'Forum Theatre' and shows how strategies used in this approach can be transferred to role-play activities and add depth to the de-briefing process. I argue that by utilising elements of 'Forum Theatre', such as 'frozen images' and 'multiple solutions,' facilitators can encourage participants to take more control of the learning and evaluate their work throughout the role-play process, rather than at the end as is usual practice. I also investigate Boal's concept of the 'spec-actor': a participant in the drama who is both involved yet critically detached from the role-play event and analyse its potential as a de-briefing tool.

INTRODUCTION

Role-play is a learning approach that allows participants to explore different roles in various contexts. Its success relies on 'the spontaneous performance of participants when placed in a hypothetical situation' (Taylor & Walford, 1978, p.9). These 'hypotheticals' may relate to roles and situations experienced by the learner in their everyday lives or might involve investigating as yet untried scenarios or fantasy contexts. For example, participants could practice and refine their assertiveness skills in relation to their colleagues at work, or trial a negotiation interview that is due to take place in the future. In a simulation such as 'Bafa Bafa' participants find themselves in a fantasy scenario where they have to adopt the role of strangers

visiting an imaginary new culture and respond to the unusual rituals and practices they encounter there (Saunders et al, 1997, Shirts, 1977).

Role-play activities are usually presented in three sequential stages. These are the briefing of the role-play, the running of it, and the de-briefing of the role-play activity. The briefing stage involves setting up the exercise, developing the scenario, allocating roles and outlining the ground rules for practice. Once the participants are clear about the scenario and their roles within it, then the role-play can be run and the action begins. Finally there is the de-briefing stage; the role-playing stops and participants have time to consider the implications of what they have experienced. Van Ments (1983) describes this stage as 'the final withdrawal of the players from the action' (p.130). This disengagement from the role-play allows space for reflection on what may have been learnt during the session. In educational terms, therefore, the de-briefing stage can be seen as 'the most important part of the activity' (Van Ments, p.127). To emphasise this, it is suggested that the time for de-briefing should be as long as the role-play itself or, if practical, twice or three times as long.

Debriefing is often the most problematic stage for the facilitator because it deals with what has emerged from the role-play experience. Precise outcomes cannot be predicted beforehand because of the spontaneous, unpredictable, creative nature of the role-play process. A level of *uncertainty* is implicit in the whole role-play approach. Uncertainty is not an undesirable weakness but a highly desirable strength of this strategy as it mirrors the unexpected nature of life events. It does mean however, that what happens in a role-play can be 'anyone's guess' (Taylor & Walford, 1978, p.9). Given this, it is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, for a facilitator to plan in advance detailed ways of proceeding with a de-brief. This is because the material to be dealt with is by definition unknown *until it emerges* from the participants. How then does the facilitator help highlight what participants can learn through a role-play activity?

This paper will consider several different models of de-briefing and consider which ones are the most effective in terms of helping participants learn when using role-play strategy.

LAYING A THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR ROLE-PLAY DE-BRIEFING

One of the strengths of the role-play approach is its practical nature: its emphasis on 'learning by doing'. This means that descriptions of it often focus on the practical techniques involved in facilitating role-play events. As a consequence, an investigation of the theoretical frameworks that inform the role-play approach to learning is often absent in writing about it (Van Ments, 1983, Jones & Palmer, 1987). I suggest that an understanding of the theoretical basis of role-play as a learning approach and an appreciation of its particular learning characteristics can help determine the best way to de-brief this process.

In adult education role-play is usually identified as an experiential learning strategy and linked to the progressive view of education that developed from the ideas of John Dewey. This perspective stresses 'an experiential, problem-solving

approach to learning,' which emphasises 'the experience of (the) learner in determining problem areas and (the) solution to be considered' (White and Brockett, 1987, p.13). It closely relates to the characteristics of this approach to learning as described by Boud and Miller (1996, p.9 & 10). They propose that experience-based learning requires that experience should be the basis for learning. It assumes that learners use their prior experience, including their social and cultural backgrounds, to actively construct meaning from situations they encounter. Learning is 'a seamless whole' and multi-dimensional, embracing the cognitive, psycho-motor and affective educational domains. It is contextual and takes account of the social, cultural, economic and political circumstances that inform the experience. It also recognises the important part that emotions can play in any learning event.

As pointed out earlier, the creation of learning experiences is fundamental to role-play strategy. These experiences are placed in situations that mirror life experience such as in the negotiation interview, or are set in fantasy contexts that parallel it, as in the 'Bafa Bafa' cross-cultural example. In both cases, participants are involved in actively constructing meaning from the experience and because it takes place in a social context have the opportunity to review the social political aspects of the experience. Working within a particular context that relates to life events and being actively involved in a specially designed situation, also encourages a holistic approach to learning, including a recognition of the emotions that play a part in these simulated activities.

Experience-based learning offers a set of concepts that can assist in constructing a theoretical framework to help us better understand role-play practice and provides a framework for de-briefing role-play events.

FACILITATING THE DE-BRIEFING PROCESS IN ROLE-PLAY

Boud and Miller (1996) also introduce in the form of the 'animator' a model of facilitation for experience-based learning. The function of the 'animator' is to act with learners 'in situations where learning is an aspect of what is occurring, to assist them with their experience' (p.7). They suggest how each of the five characteristics of experience-based learning can be 'animated' into being by the facilitator. For example, animators need to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning, so there is space for them to actively construct what the experience means to them. The animation of the characteristics of experience-based learning could therefore provide touchstones for evaluating an experience-based process such as role-play.

The animation approach suggested by Boud and Miller can be seen in essence as being closely aligned to the classic model of de-briefing role-play that Van Ments (1983) provides in his book 'The Effective Use of Role-play: a handbook for teachers and trainers'. Whilst acknowledging that each tutor will have their own approach to evaluating role-play exercises, Van Ments offers a logical framework for helping learners evaluate the role-play experience. This process is divided into three phases. It requires the facilitator to begin by asking questions that help participants recognise what actually happened during the role-play activity. This signals that the experience is fundamental to the learning process and allows space for

discussing behaviours observed, assumptions made and any feelings that participants experienced during the role-play. Next participants are asked to analyse the situation further, 'draw conclusions about the way people behave' and 'decide what can be done to improve the situation' (p.133). This focuses on the new meanings that participants have constructed through the role-play event. An amended re-run of the role-play may occur at this point to act as a counterpoint to the original presentation. Finally learners are asked to draw general conclusions from the role-play activity and make connections between the situation they experienced in the classroom and the outside world. Questions in this final phase of the de-briefing allow the social, cultural and political implications of the learning to be recognised as well as emphasising the integrated, holistic nature of the process.

If we take the example of the negotiation situation mentioned earlier, we can speculate how this approach could work in practice. If the negotiation related to a situation where a couple who are both working full-time, were trying to decide who has responsibility for doing particular domestic duties around the home, the de-briefing might develop in the following way. In the 'what happened?' stage, participants might discuss the different behaviours and feelings that were exhibited in the role-play. During the phase when participants are asked to analyse the incident and suggest improvements, there would be an opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of particular negotiation strategies such as 'principled' versus 'hard' approaches (Fisher and Ury, p.13). In the final phase, participants have the opportunity to discuss how their experience in the role-play relates to wider issues, such as other situations where negotiation is used. An example of this negotiation could involve unions in the workplace or politicians on a global basis. Feminist issues to do with how housework is perceived as part of the female domain, as unpaid and therefore less important than paid work, could also be raised here (Oakley, 1974).

The experience-based educational approach coupled with the logical framework provided by Van Ments can therefore be seen to offer a useful framework for the de-briefing of role-play.

It also however, has its limitations. I will identify some of those limitations and propose an alternative model for the de-briefing of role-play through an exploration of the approach of Boal (1993) and his use of Forum Theatre.

LIMITATIONS TO THE EXPERIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO DE-BRIEFING

The experience-based, progressive approach has been criticised (Newman, 1993, Bolton, 1984, Bennett, 1983, Hornbrook, 1989) for its tendency to focus on the individual and on personal growth. This, it is argued, is detrimental to an understanding of the contextual social, political and cultural elements inherent in experiential activities such as role-play. Although both the de-briefing models I have described above allow for this kind of analysis, often in practice the learning does not make the transition from the personal to the social or political. Rather, it resides at the behavioural stage (relating to phases 1 and 2 in Van Ments' model) or focuses on strong feelings that emerge during the role-play experience. In many cases it is easier to focus on the

immediate interests of how the role-play affected the participants personally rather than highlight social and political issues inherent in the activity. These issues require participants to move away from seeing the experience in terms of 'What happened to me' and adopt a macro view of what occurred in the role-play situation. The focus then moves from 'What happened to me' to 'What social/political forces shaped the situation and influenced the behaviour of participants.' Newman believes that if the de-briefing of an experiential activity does not encourage participants to delve beyond personal issues, it compromises the integrity of this educational approach, transforming it into a 'self-indulgent, directionless and dangerous' activity.

Newman (1993) stresses the need for role-plays to present 'a truly critical incident' that 'presents the participants with a number of dilemmas (p.146). He refers to Heron's (1986) model of 'authoritative interventions' (p.2) that contains three approaches: the informative, confronting and prescriptive intervention strategies. He argues that these can be used to make the de-briefing of experiential activities a more challenging and complex learning experience which can move participants from personal reflection to an understanding of wider social and political issues. The facilitator using this approach is required to take on a more controlling role in terms of intervening in the learning that is suggested by the Boud and Miller animation model.

For example, in the informative intervention the facilitator presents facts and information that may add substance to the social or political context being explored in the role-play. In relation to the negotiation interview example, this might include statistics on which gender does most in terms of domestic chores. The confronting intervention, 'challenges the attitudes and behaviours of participants that might have been limiting their effectiveness and of which they may have been unaware' (p.149). A direct question to participants asking them what *they* do in terms of housework in their household could act as a confrontational question in the negotiation context. A prescriptive intervention is where the facilitator clearly directs participant behaviour. Examples include suddenly giving a time limit for the completion of the negotiation process or adding a 'wild card' element during the role-play such as determining that one person in the domestic negotiation is involved in regular overtime work.

Newman (1993) is writing about the relevance of role-play to union training and his educational perspective is unashamedly political in nature. His approach to the de-briefing of role-play does however highlight how facilitators can play a significant role in highlighting the social and political dimensions of role-play activities.

Whilst Newman's perspective adds to our understanding of the de-briefing of role-play activities, it still is based on the idea of the facilitator being the initiator of the de-briefing and this coming summatively at the end of the experiential event. The focus of de-briefing is on sitting down and talking. The action is at an end and now is the time to talk, reflect and learn.

Investing too much power in the facilitator concerns Bennett (1983). He suggests that if the teacher is in control, the de-briefing of a role-play event will 'only make explicit what is in the mental spectrum of the teacher at the onset' (p.22). This reminds us that role-play is just a means of learning, a strategy for the investigation of problems. It has no inherent learning subject content of its own but is dependent on the experience of the participants and the expectations of the facilitator for its substance.

How then can role-play be de-briefed in a way that takes account of the interests and needs of the participants as well as those of the facilitator? Bennett suggests that the theatre practitioner Augusto Boal (1979) can provide a useful model for drama practice. I have already (Collier, 1998) argued that role-play needs to be re-connected to its theatrical roots in order for it to be fully realised as a learning approach. If we acknowledge that this is the case, then Boal's approach could be relevant to the way role-play is facilitated and de-briefed in adult education.

ROLE-PLAY'S DRAMATIC ROOTS

Once we engage in role-play activities we are involved in exploring ideas through the medium of dramatic form. Bolton describes some of its essential elements as 'the deliberate manipulation, for example of time, space, sound and colour' (1990, p.4). Another dimension of dramatic form is the way these elements are given conscious attention. The way we set up a role-play scene, the placing of a chair or person in a particular position, the way language is spoken or silence is employed is done to create a certain dramatic effect. This gives events a particular significance: the artifice of the form actually makes the everyday special.

Making fictitious social events is a form of make believe playing, but it only becomes significant as dramatic art when attention is given to the art form of theatre.

(Bolton, 1992, p.19)

This heightened form of consciousness is part of the aesthetic experience that drama as an art form can provide for participants. This dimension of heightened attention is not only relevant to the elements of dramatic form mentioned above but also related to the participants' experience within a dramatic event. This entails them being involved in acting out a situation but also being aware at the same time that they are contributing to a presentation of a piece of artifice: a representation of reality. Bolton proposes that 'all drama is dependant on participants having a dual awareness of both the 'real' and the fictitious worlds' (p.18). This form of heightened consciousness in drama is known as metaxis (Boal, 1995). Metaxis offers participants the opportunity to view experience from the perspective of being simultaneously part of yet apart from the role they have adopted. It also offers a different approach to de-briefing, a formative one that allows participants to reflect-in-action rather than outside it at the end of the role-play.

A recent television programme (1997) analysed different productions of Shakespeare's play 'King Lear'. In one of the bloodiest scenes in the play, Lear's daughter Regan helps her husband take revenge on Lear by putting out the eyes of Gloucester, one of Lear's faithful retainers. Immediately after Regan has completed this horrific act she turns to face the audience. The actor playing the part describes the looks of disgust and hatred directed towards her in the eyes of the audience in the front few rows that she can see beyond the stage lights, and the strangeness of experiencing this. This is occurring however whilst she is still in the role of Regan. It is a classic example of metaxis and the reflection in action that is possible through the use of theatrical form.

A 'FORUM' FOR THE DE-BRIEFING OF ROLE-PLAY

An acknowledgment of the theatrical elements of role-play means there is the potential to consciously use this form to reflect and learn within the action as well as outside of it. It also allows the responsibility for de-briefing to rest with the participant rather than the facilitator. As Bolton (1992) notes 'the meaning of the event is at least partially, encapsulated in its form' (p.19). It is important therefore to find a theatrical form that encourages metaxis, allows participants to engage in reflection-in-action and have some choice as to when they intervene in order to evaluate what has been or could be learnt from the event. The Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, provides us with a form of theatre that can be utilised in role-play practice and which encourages metaxis to occur.

The concept of metaxis is an important one for Boal. He renames participants who take part in his dramatic events 'spec-actors'. This term is used to stress the dual nature of the performance process: it is to do with action but also concerned with watching this action and being critically aware at the same time.

Theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself, when it discovers that, in this act of seeing, it can see itself *in situ*: see itself seeing.

(1995, p.13)

Boal sees theatre as a revolutionary tool and devised the Forum Theatre approach as a means of helping the oppressed people of South America find a collective voice through theatrical form and a means of empowerment through the practice of actions that might lead to a possibility of change. Forum Theatre has been deliberately devised as an educational process: participants are intended to have learnt something at the end of the performance and not just have been entertained by it. His theatre is not intended to be 'didactic in the in the old sense of the word and style, but pedagogic, in the sense of collective learning' (1995, p.7).

Boal (1979) believes that traditional bourgeois theatre which is based on the ideas of Aristotle has disempowered its audiences by making them passive observers of the drama rather than active participants in it as they had originally been when theatre was a natural form of ritual performed by and for the people. He sees the separation between audience and the actors as problematic. This is because it is the actors who are in control of the performance whilst the audience are encouraged to identify with the protagonists (heroes) on stage and live vicariously through their actions. This empathy is necessary so that the audience can relate to the main character's fatal flaw (for example Othello's jealousy, Lear's conceit and temper) and recognise it as their own. This is intended to invoke pity and fear in the audience who see the downfall of the protagonist and realise a similar fate awaits them if they do not conform to the norms of society. This experience which Aristotle terms 'catharsis' is, according to Boal, 'in effect the purgation of all anti-social elements' (1993, p.46).

This kind of theatre does not stimulate its audience to be critically aware of the social and political forces that help shape their lives. Forum Theatre is designed to break down the artificial barriers created by the bourgeois theatre form and instead provides a forum where issues can be explored through acting them out and analysing the social and political impact that these incidents have on the lives of the participants.

Although Boal's focus on theatre as a revolutionary tool may not seem appropriate for many involved in the facilitation of role-play, Boal's view of a theatre that encourages full participation in the dramatic action relates to the place of the learner in role-play activities. The focus by him on theatre as an educational tool is another element that also aligns Boal's work to that of educational role-play. His interest in metaxis and the need to promote critical thinking within the drama suggests the theatrical form offered by Forum Theatre can provide an alternative framework for the de-briefing of role-play events; one that is aware of the social political contexts of the experiential scenario.

THE LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY FORUM THEATRE

It is the strategies that Boal uses to promote critical learning through theatrical form which I believe can be of most interest and potential use to the way we consider running role-plays and de-briefing them in adult education.

Boal (1992) stresses the importance of the visual in role-play activities. One of the reasons why he does this is to cater for the often illiterate participants: these people often had a stronger confidence in their physical rather than verbal powers of expression. Boal also realises the power of the pictorial in dramatic terms and the ability of the physical environment and human non-verbal communication to convey a message.

We can begin by stating that the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement. Therefore, to control the means of theatrical production, man (sic) must, first of all, control his own body, know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive (p.125).

The strategy he uses to achieve this is to get participants to create frozen images of an event that has particular significance to them in terms of demonstrating a 'social or political error' (p.18). These images are refined to a point where they communicate in as simple and aesthetically pure a way as possible, the essence of the problem they have identified. Although the facilitator has suggested a learning focus, it is the participants who determine how to interpret that area and choose what experiences they wish to represent. They determine how the images should be presented but are given feedback from other participants as to how they have interpreted the images presented to them. Learners are encouraged to read the frozen images as if they were reading a picture. Their focus on an image concentrates attention on the manipulation of the key elements of dramatic form: space, time, and narrative sequence. It can also encourage participants to engage in the aesthetic experience of drama form. An appreciation of these elements can add a new dimension to the de-briefing process. Words and movements are added sparingly to the images until the scene emerges in a form that has little or no excess elements in it that detract from the issue being explored: the unresolved problem that is the focus of the learning. Flemming (1995) notes how strategies such as freeze-frame or tableaux 'are techniques which do provide focus and slow the drama down – they halt the onward rush of story line in order to promote reflection, engagement and serious attention to the consequences of actions' (p.3).

It is then when the 'game' of Forum Theatre really begins. The aim of this exercise is to challenge the 'vision of the world' presented by the performers. This is done by

a member of the audience intervening in the action and offering a different vision, another possibility. The audience member takes over the part of the relevant actor in the piece and re-plays the scene with the changes she/he envisaged. The actor who has been replaced doesn't retire immediately but 'stays on the sidelines as a kind of coach or supporter, to encourage the spec-actors and correct them if they go wrong' (p.20). Other spec-actors can then offer different suggestions that try to bring about a solution to the problem. Alternatives are practiced in action as well as discussed: the connection between the two is an important element in Forum Theatre. The problem may or may not be resolved but the exercise reveals the complexities inherent in any situation and shows that there are many ways of approaching or thinking about them. Overseeing the action is the 'Joker' who is responsible for overseeing the Forum Theatre process but does not direct the event in terms of the learning that takes place. The emphasis is on the process doing the structuring of learning for the participants.

Another negotiation scenario can be used to illustrate how the Forum Theatre approach could be used in this context. Participants work in small groups creating scenarios they have chosen as being relevant to them, which show an injustice or an unfairness that they have experienced in this area. They refine these through the use of the tableau approach. One group devises a situation which shows a worker who has had to negotiate an enterprise agreement for the first time with their manager. The worker is unused to the situation and overwhelmed by having to argue their case. Consequently they passively accept the first pay offer and conditions put forward by the manager. After the scene has been shown to the rest of the group, the Joker asks if they can see other ways that the scenario could have been played out which would empower the worker and counter the injustice. A member of the group puts up their hand and offers to take over the part of the worker. The scene is replayed but this time the new player acts assertively and gets the manager to make a couple of compromises in terms of work conditions but does not shift on pay levels. The group discuss what has taken place, sometimes questioning the role-players in their roles as managers or workers highlighting the problems that still remain. Another participant comes into the scene as a union representative who puts forward an argument for joining the union and getting their representative to bargain for them collectively. As the alternatives are presented the group uses the practice and discussion to critique the situation: ideas are expressed in action and words.

Forum Theatre's social and political focus, plus its use of dramatic form, offers the participants a range of learning possibilities. This is achieved through the acknowledgment of social inequity and expressed through the conscious use of dramatic form through the development of the still images. The dynamic manipulation of time, action and role in the game of Forum Theatre, allows participants in the drama to be both in the experience and yet outside it. They can critically evaluate what the situation means to them through the process of metaxis. They are learning not only the content of the issue under exploration but also something about the nature of theatre and how to manipulate its forms in order to gain insight into learning issues. Acknowledging the artistic elements of role-play, I would argue, allows us to use it in a much more complex and imaginative way. It gives us the potential as facilitators to bring about more interesting evaluations of what has taken place, and can empower the learners to

take more responsibility to decide what they want to learn and how. The conventional de-briefing has been transformed into a process of 'in-briefing'.

In addition the use of role-play's full potential as an art form including the encouraging of metaxis means that there is an opportunity to learn through action and not just through discussion at the end of the action. Rather than the energy levels being depleted at the end of a role-play session as participants wind down for the de-brief, participants can now keep the energy inherent in the role-play action alive throughout and yet still sustain the ability to be critically aware at the same time. Boal's model of Forum Theatre presents us with a model that provides a supplement to the usual approaches to de-briefing and a challenging new forum for the de-briefing of role-play in adult education.

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Chapter 3

Dramatic changes – a new action model for role-play practice

Kate Collier

ABSTRACT

One of the key problems related to the use of role-play in adult education (Collier, 1998) is the management of the emotional elements within a role-play situation. Whilst the ability of role-play strategy to engage participants in affective modes of learning is recognized as a crucial aspect of this experiential learning approach, it was also seen as potentially dangerous for both facilitators and participants alike. Van Ments (1992) and Jones (1994) question the benefit of participants becoming too emotionally involved in their roles and raise the issue of whether facilitators of this kind of learning are acting as therapists rather than educators.

This chapter argues that it is possible to value the affective elements of learning inherent in a role-play situation, but to do this there is a need to re-examine the way role-play is theorized and practised in adult education

At present role-play in adult education is usually perceived as an experience-based learning strategy (White and Brockett, 1987) and linked to Kolb's (1984) model of 'learning and cognitive development': the 'experiential learning cycle'. This model provides a theoretical framework for the use of role-play as well as other experience-based learning techniques. It will be argued that Kolb's model is too limited to deal with the complexities of learning inherent in a role-play situation. Therefore, a new model is presented for role-play practice: the 'dramatic action model'. The model's theoretical foundations will be described and an extended example given of how it can be used in practice. The 'dramatic action model' is designed to address some of the weaknesses of Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle'; it does this by returning to role-play's roots in drama and theatre arts.

INTRODUCTION

Consider the following role-play scenario. A group of students who are studying to be adult educators, are exploring issues raised by a newspaper article. It concerns local Sydney residents whose suburb is being gentrified and developed for 'yuppie' clients. The changes brought about by the influx of new residents and the new culture they bring with them alienates the local, long-term residents. The group is interested in

exploring issues to do with conflict brought about by difference and the newspaper article provides a stimulus for this debate.

The facilitator asks participants to identify the different interest groups represented in the article. The group then lists a range of generic roles such as long-term resident, newcomer, estate agent, local councillor, shopkeeper, etc, and each member is allocated one of these roles. They are then asked to role-play a local precinct committee meeting, where residents have the opportunity to raise issues that concern them. A long table is set up and the participants sit around it. One of the students takes on the role of the chair of the meeting and initiates a discussion of the conflicts that have developed between newcomers and long-term tenants. A heated argument ensues between the opposing groups. At one point in the role-play, a long-term resident who has been evicted from her home (so that the landlord can redevelop the property and sell it for a large profit to a newcomer) storms out of the room. She has identified strongly with her role and seems visibly distressed by the lack of sympathy she seems to be getting from her adversaries. At the end of the role-play meeting she returns but sits slightly apart from the rest of the group and refuses to participate further in the exercise.

The facilitator then asks the group to reflect on the role-play experience. They talk about their perceptions of what happened, how they felt during the exercise and try to link this experience to other situations and contexts. Someone in the group connects the arguments that emerged in the role-play to other conflicts that relate to difference, such as race and gender. Another participant mentions the difference the chairperson can make to the way a meeting is conducted and how they can determine if voices are heard or silenced. The group decides to repeat the role-play with a new chairperson in place and discuss how this changes perceptions of the issues under debate.

This scenario provides an example of a role-play that has been facilitated according to Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle'. It also demonstrates one of the limitations of this approach. During the role-play one of the participants becomes so involved in her role that it triggers a strong emotional reaction. This results in her total withdrawal from the learning experience.

Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle' will be analysed to identify why it has restricted usefulness as a model for role-play practice and suggest an alternative approach: the 'dramatic action model'. This has been designed to deal with the limitations inherent in Kolb's model and widens the scope of what role-play can do and consequently its possibilities as a learning strategy in adult education.

The limitations of Kolb's learning cycle as a model for role-play practice

Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle' is recognized (Henry, 1989; Packham *et al.*, 1989) as providing the basis for experiential learning practice and therefore is the one that is most readily employed in the facilitation of role-play in adult education.

His model of experiential learning refines the work of other writers in the field, such as Lewin (1951), Dewey (1938) and Piaget (1978). They focus on the idea that experiential learning exists as a particular form of learning; one that is distinguished by 'the central role that experience plays in the learning process' (Kolb, 1984: 20).

In its most basic form, the 'experiential learning cycle' consists of four distinct phases (see Figure 3.1). These are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Learning is based in immediate personal experience. Just having the experience however is not enough and for learning to take place the participant must reflect on the experience and use it to develop new concepts that can be tried out and practised. This in turn leads to new learning and so the cycle continues.

The role-play meeting scenario described above is a classic example of Kolb's model in action. Participants engage in the precinct committee meeting role-play (concrete experience). After the meeting, the facilitator helps the group to reflect on what they have learned from the experience (reflective observation). They then are encouraged to consider what wider resonances this particular situation may have and link it to other scenarios and ideas (abstract conceptualization) such as the power of the role of the chair in meetings. Finally, the group explores the implications of this new learning for another experience, in this case the second meeting scenario (active experimentation), and the cycle is complete or ready to roll into action again.

Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle' provides a useful framework for role-play practice as it places experience at the centre of the learning process. As one of the strengths of role-play strategy is its dramatic ability to represent situations that mirror real life (Bolton, 1992), it can therefore provide a limitless range of concrete experiences that participants can use as a basis for learning. These can then be consciously developed into learning events through the systematic use of Kolb's model. In this way 'knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner' (Kolb, 1984, p 27). There is a balance between the active and reflective elements operating within the model and this allows participants the space to consider the implications of action; 'thus in the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer, and from specific involvement to general analytic detachment' (p 31).

Unfortunately, this ability to detach and connect with experience at will does not always occur in role-play practice. This was evident when the participant in the role-play meeting scenario identified too closely with her role: the fictional representation of 'real life'. It triggered off strong associations, which in turn generated a strong emotional response and led her to leave the classroom. As a consequence, she emerged from the role-play distressed and reluctant to learn from an experience where she felt she 'lost control' (Jones, 1997). The possibility of engaging the whole person mentally, physically and emotionally in the educational process is seen as a particular strength of experiential learning (Boud *et al.*, 1993), but it is also viewed as a limiting factor that makes learning potentially 'dangerous' for participants and facilitators alike.

The limitations of Kolb's experiential learning model become apparent when its framework fails to offer a better understanding of the complexities of participant involvement and detachment in a role-play. This can only be achieved through an appreciation of the dramatic roots of role-play and its particular characteristics as an art form.

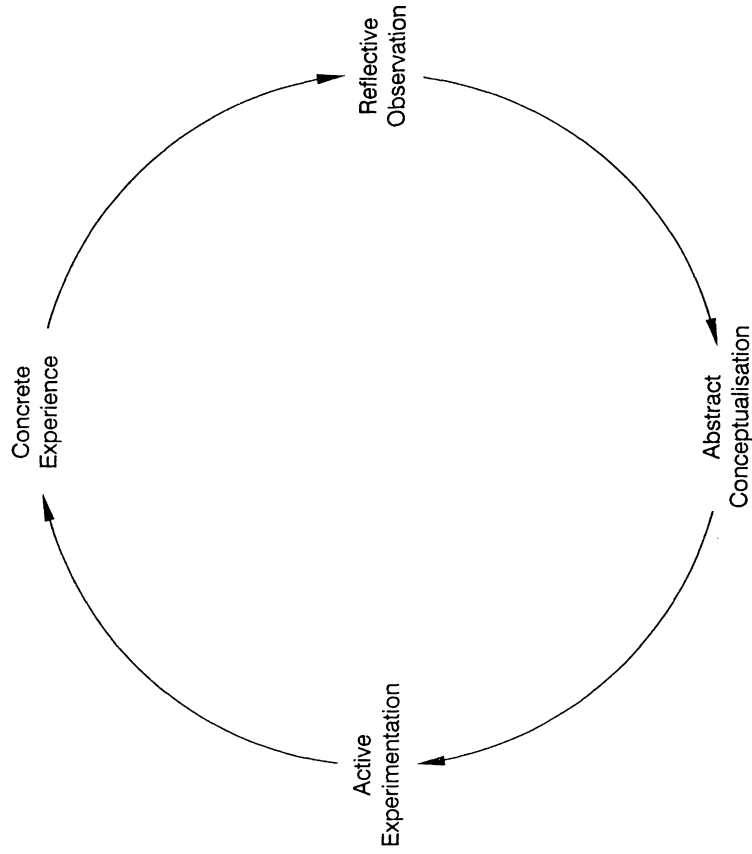


Figure 3.1 Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle'

The 'dramatic action model' proposed as an alternative to Kolb's model, recognizes that role-play is principally a dramatic strategy. It re-positions it as an arts-based learning approach. The rationale behind this realignment will now be outlined to show how it can counter problems raised in the meeting role-play scenario.

The development of a new dramatic model of role-play practice

In drama and theatre arts theory, role-play is viewed as an 'act of the imagination' (Jennings, 1991), as a fictional representation of the 'real world' as we perceive it. Once role-play has been identified as having its basis in drama, it is possible to identify certain characteristics that are peculiar to it as an art form. Meaning in drama is created through the participants' 'fictional and symbolic uses of human presence in time and space' (Neelands, 1991). The symbolic use of objects, light and sound can also be used as an enhanced means of communicating understanding. The precise nature and the relationship between these different dramatic elements have

been identified as 'dramatic conventions'. An understanding of these conventions allows participants and facilitators to appreciate role-play's inherent dramatic form and realize how this can be utilized in a learning context.

There are four dramatic conventions. These represent different aspects of dramatic action: Context-building, Narrative, Poetic and Reflective. Context-building action is concerned with developing the dramatic situation, setting the scene for the role-play so that it has credibility. Narrative action focuses on the storyline and the 'what happens next' element; it drives the role-play along. Poetic action is interested in valuing the symbolic and metaphoric possibilities inherent in the role-play situation and discovering a means of 'holding the essence of an experience' (Neelands, p 7). Reflective action allows space for participants to consider what they have experienced and focus on the meanings that have been created for individuals and the group as a whole.

A range of drama strategies is allocated to each convention. These have been identified as approaches that will develop the particular focus of each convention. For example, the strategy, 'Defining Space' is concerned with the use of available furniture and props to represent the scenario of the role-play. In the role-play scenario just described, it involved the setting of the table and chairs for the meeting. It is a strategy that helps mark out the dramatic boundaries of the situation to be explored and gives it a precise setting. This strategy adds to the Context-building action and is a means of developing the interests of that convention. The key idea behind the model is to use strategies from the different conventions, to use theatrical form consciously to develop learning within the dramatic experience.

The 'dramatic action model' that was developed to provide a new theoretical framework for role-play practice uses dramatic conventions as the basis of the model. This ensures that role-play's dramatic nature and art form are valued and can be used in the learning process. Once role-play is positioned as an art form, it can capitalize on the way this can influence the learning experience. A work of art has a 'tendency to appear dissociated from its mundane environment. The most immediate impression it creates is one of "otherness" from reality.' (Langer, 1979: 45). If art form has the ability to create a sense of detachment from the 'real world,' then this can be utilized to prevent participants getting too involved in role-play situations.

In the 'dramatic action model', dramatic conventions have been organized into two categories: those that encourage participants to identify and relate closely to the role-play process and those that detach participants from the role-play experience and stress the artificial, representational elements of this drama form.

The 'dramatic action model' and the principles that underpin its use

The 'dramatic action model' (see Figure 3.2) resembles an archery target but one designed with circles of different widths. Arrows seem to be going in all directions! The four conventions outlined above are placed in the bull's-eye and outer target rings. The conventions take up the main portion of the model and this indicates the important part they play in its structure. Although the conventions are separated from one another, they are also connected by channels and arrows that indicate their

close connections and the way they can overlap in practice. The arrows also suggest that there should be regular movement and interaction between the conventions during the dramatic role-play experience. All of the conventions need to be employed in order to create a balance in terms of utilizing dramatic form and they need not be used in a cyclical fashion but more randomly in an order appropriate to the development of the dramatic event.

The thinner circles on the target act as a reminder of how the conventions function in terms of involving participants in or detaching them from the drama experience. This relates to the theatrical concept of 'metaxis' that refers to participants in the role-play drama having a dual awareness of the real and fictitious: being both in and out of the drama at the same time (Bolton, 1992). The deliberate use of dramatic form can encourage 'metaxis' to occur and also allows for participants to be more critically aware of what they are doing in the drama and its meaning for them. The dramatic conventions provide a valuable framework for developing 'metaxis' during a role-play activity. Two of the conventions are concerned with involving participants in the drama whilst the other two are designed to shift them out of the fiction and bring them back to 'reality'.

The Context-building and Narrative action conventions are structured to involve the participants in the dramatic process and encourage them to identify with the situation, characters and action of the scenario being developed. Context-building action does this through fleshing out details of character and situation whilst the Narrative action invites involvement through building up the story, using aspects such as tension and suspense to 'hook' participants into the drama. These conventions take advantage of the naturalistic elements of dramatic form, which allow it to replicate 'real-life' situations.

The Symbolic and Reflective action conventions do the opposite. They are designed to move participants out of the drama. This is achieved by making participants more aware of the artifice of the dramatic form. In Symbolic action, this is achieved by focusing on the representational aspects of dramatic form: its non-naturalistic elements such as symbol and metaphor. In Reflective action, the dramatic action and the feeling of operating in 'real time' is suspended to allow space for reflection. Once again, the artificial or representational nature of dramatic form is brought to the foreground, reminding participants that they are part of a learning process that involves both being in and out of the action.

An example of the 'dramatic action' model in use

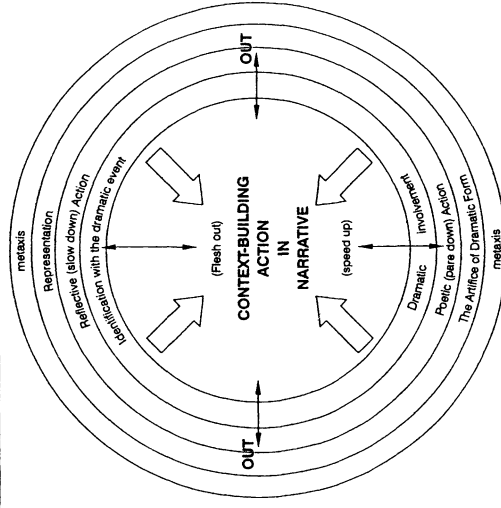
A short newspaper article was devised as a stimulus for showing how the model described above can be used. There are however many other kinds of stimuli that could also be employed, ranging from pictures, cartoons, texts, song, spoken story and props – the possibilities are as endless as your imagination or that of the participants! This article was devised in order to raise issues about how different parties may view the same situation and to examine if stereotyping was an issue that affected the arguments that took place. These are only two of the possible issues that may emerge; many others come from participants when they engage in the learning

CONTEXT-BUILDING ACTION STRATEGIES

- Soundtracking
- Collective drawing
- Role on the wall
- Games
- Costuming
- Unfinished materials
- Defining space
- Diaries, letters, journals

NARRATIVE ACTION STRATEGIES

- Telephone/radio conversations
- Mantle of expert
- Meetings
- Interviews/interrogations
- Whole group role-play



POETIC ACTION STRATEGIES

- Captioning
- Masks
- Montage
- Mimi
- Role-reversal
- Forum theatre
- Re-enactment

REFLECTIVE ACTION STRATEGIES

- Marking the moment
- Moment of truth
- Narration
- Thought tracking
- Voices in the head

Figure 3.2 The dramatic action model

situation. The article was devised for working with adults but may also be relevant for younger groups. A time frame of one and a half to two hours is needed.

All the strategies employed in this example are from 'Structuring Drama Work' (Neelands, 1991). A description of the nature of these strategies is given here, but it is necessary to refer to the book for further detail. This example only focuses on the use of a few strategies from a range of 47 on offer. All the dramatic conventions

described are used to develop dramatic form in a consciously balanced manner. This should give an idea of the way the model operates in action. Strategies have also been chosen and developed in a way that have been judged to be least threatening at the start and more challenging at the end. Throughout, the concept of 'metaxis' informs the way the model is used. This means that opportunities are created for participants to move in and out of the drama so they are dramatically involved but are also critically aware. The idea behind this is to avoid them being completely 'lost' in the drama and the emotional world that it can create. As stated before, once participants lose their sense of being in a fictional learning situation they can find themselves identifying so strongly with a role that it is hard to separate it from reality. This can be a disorientating and emotionally uncomfortable experience for some people (Blake, 1987; and Van Ments, 1983).

The following example will try to show not only the different drama elements being used but also why they are being used and for what effect.

Starting the session

The session begins with a game called 'How do you like your Neighbour?' (Brandes and Phillips, 1979). This energizer asks participants, in a light-hearted fashion, to say if they like their neighbours (the people sitting either side of them) and whatever they answer has implications for whether they move or not and get stuck in the middle without a chair.

The game is not only used as a fun energizer but is the first of the Neelands strategies to be used. 'Games' come under the 'Context-building action' convention and are employed to raise themes or situations relevant to the drama. In this case, it is to do with the issues of community and neighbourhood raised in the newspaper article. The game introduces the article and helps participants to move into the drama more smoothly.

The newspaper stimulus

Yuppies go home

Tension between local residents of Darlinghurst, East Sydney, and the trendy newcomers to the area, is evident in the graffiti on the sides of houses. 'Yuppies get lost', 'Leave locals in Peace', are the messages that are being forcibly put across.

Local residents are angry at the way new houses are being bought up and done up by the rich and trendy. Estate agents admit that prices are booming and business is brisk. Locals complain that they are being pushed out of an area that they have lived in all their lives by incomers who force up the prices in shops and restaurants and cause an increase in the rent of local accommodation.

'We can't afford to live here any more', says one resident. Builders argue that if the market is there for renovated houses it's their job to make sure they provide them for customers regardless of what this might do to the local community. Restaurant owners and shops say business has never been so good and accuse local residents of whingeing. Locals say the whole character of the area and its community spirit has been ruined by flashy startups and heartless profiteers.

Participants first read the newspaper article and talk about their first impressions of it and the issues that it raises.

It is then necessary to gain cooperation from the group to explore the article further using a variety of Neelands' (1991) different interactive strategies. The second strategy employed is 'Collective Drawing', which again comes under the Context-building action convention. The aim is for participants to get interested and involved in the drama so the conventions that are designed to do this are used. 'Collective Drawing' requires participants to make a collective image to represent a place or people in the drama. In this situation the group is asked to split into smaller groups of about four people and on large sheets of paper draw the graffiti that would be found on the walls of houses around Darlinghurst. We then put the graffiti paper on the walls and comment on what impression it makes and what points are being raised through it.

Leaving participants to work in the same groups, 'Still-image' and 'Caption-making' strategies are used to develop the context of the drama further. 'Still-image' requires participants to use their own bodies to crystallize a moment, idea or a theme. They create a physical still picture: a frozen moment of drama. 'Caption-making' is about devising slogans, chapter headings of what is being presented visually. 'Still-image' is part of the context-building convention; it gets participants literally to build up a picture of the situation as they see it. 'Caption-making', however, is about distilling the experience, finding the essence of the drama. It comes under the Poetic action convention as this is concerned with moving the action on to a symbolic level that stresses the artificial nature of dramatic form. 'Caption-making' allows the drama to be slowed down and gives space for looking at the drama from the outside. It also encourages a move from focusing on contextual detail to finding the essence of a situation: its key motif. Participants in the 'Yuppies Go Home' example are asked to create the picture (using their bodies and any props at hand) that might accompany the newspaper article that they have just read ('Still-image') and the headline that might accompany it ('Caption-making'). Participants look at the different pictures and headlines that the group have created and 'read' them, commenting on the meaning they have for the different observers. The group devising the pictures and headlines also has the chance to add its perceptions too. At this stage the drama and the issues raised within it should be a great deal more complex and detailed than were offered by the initial article.

Participants then return to their 'Still-pictures' and introduce two more strategies, 'Overheard Conversations' and 'Thought Tracking'. The first strategy involves 'eavesdropping' on short moments of conversations. The second strategy asks participants to talk their thoughts out loud: to verbalize what is going on in their heads at that time. This can differ considerably from what they have been saying! 'Overheard Conversations' are part of the Narrative action convention as they help drive the story along and let us know more about what is happening. 'Thought Tracking' comes under the Reflective action convention as it highlights the thinking process that goes on behind the dialogue and the action. Once again this can add extra depth to the groups understanding of the different issues under debate.

At this point in the activity, we decide to develop our understanding of some of the key people in the newspaper situation further and use the 'Role-on-the-Wall' strategy. An outline of a figure is drawn up on some butcher's paper and put up on the wall; it is identified as being one of the roles under investigation, in this case representing a 'yuppie' newcomer. Participants are given a few 'Post-it' stickers and are asked to put on these any qualities or characteristics that they have noticed about this role from their involvement in the drama activities. They allocate one quality/characteristic per 'Post-it' and place them in and around the figure. These can then be used as a basis for discussion and can bring into the open different perceptions people have of the role. The 'Role-on-the-Wall' can be left up and referred to regularly as the role-play activities progress. 'Post-its' can be added or subtracted from the drawing as more information is gleaned from the drama. This strategy comes under the Context-building action as it 'fleshes out' the roles in the article and adds to the group's understanding of the people involved in the story. It also seems to have a reflective function as participants are not in role but are looking at it critically from the outside.

After this, participants work in pairs. One takes on the role of a newcomer or long-term resident, the other of a journalist from a newspaper who is looking to follow up on the initial story. They engage in an 'Interview' (Narrative action) and then reverse roles so they get a different perspective of the roles they have just played. 'Role-reversal' is categorized as a Poetic action strategy as it allows participants to gain multiple perspectives and find the essence of a role.

Using the conventions to develop dramatic form

At this stage all four of the dramatic conventions have been used. The emphasis to begin with has been with building up the context in more detail and encouraging participants to become involved in the drama: to identify with the people and the situation. Strategies from the other conventions to develop the symbolic and reflective elements of the drama are also included. This allows participants the chance to slow down the drama, be aware of its form and the meanings that can be derived from this dramatic approach.

It may seem that so far that participants have not yet been involved in any role-play activity, if however we define role-play as responding 'as if' we were particular people in a particular situation (Heathcote, 1984) then it could be argued that all the strategies used so far have been a form of role-play activity. When participants draw the graffiti on the paper, they are responding 'as if' they were disgruntled Darlington residents. Creating the still pictures involves them identifying with the people in the story, or even at another level with the photo-journalist who would have taken the picture for inclusion in a newspaper. The concept of responding 'as if' in a role-play allows for different physical and mental levels of involvement in any given situation. The lesser end of this continuum has been purposefully chosen in order to help participants feel more comfortable moving into the drama being created.

The situation eventually develops into a full group role-play where participants take on the role of the different people involved in the newspaper article. The situ-

ation they are put into is a TV discussion programme – I call it the 'Issues for All', where 'warring' parties are brought together in the TV studio before a studio audience. The teacher can take on the role (Teacher-in-role – Narrative action convention) of the programme interviewer and can lead the discussion or give this role to another participant. Commercial breaks ('Come on down' – Poetic action convention) can provide 'time out' for participants and space to reflect on what has been learnt.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the role-play session described above, the dramatic conventions have been consciously used by the facilitator to draw participants into the dramatic situation. They have also been employed to encourage frequent reflection within the dramatic action, not just after the role-play has concluded, as was the case in the example that utilized Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle'. Although it seems that the facilitator strongly controls the learning situation through the use of the conventions, it would be expected over time to make participants so familiar with the different drama strategies available that they can determine what approach should be used when and why. They would then be able to manipulate dramatic form consciously in order to develop their learning according to their needs. The 'dramatic action model' is not intended to be just a guide to practice but should also provide a new language that can be used to describe the process of learning as it takes place. The different conventions and the strategies attached to them are also designed to widen the scope of what is understood by the term 'role-play' in adult education.

The 'dramatic action model' was designed to counter the problem of participants becoming too involved in role-play activities so that they are unable to be critically aware of what they are learning. At its basis is the theatrical concept of 'metaxis': a state of consciousness that promotes a dual awareness of the 'real' and 'fictitious' worlds' (Bolton, 1979). The model uses a range of dramatic conventions to develop the drama in a way that encourages facilitators and participants to find a balance between engagement and detachment in the role-play learning experience. Emotional involvement is tempered by critical consciousness. Its intention is to persuade participants to stay and learn rather than walk out of the door.

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Building Core Principles for Quality

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ABSTRACT The authors review and comment on qualitative research articles published in the *JER* 2001, which represent a wide range of qualitative research. The key finding was that patterns shifted from 1992 to 2001: an average of 1.5 articles per year for the first 7 years to an average of 3.5 articles per year for the final 3 years. The authors discuss criteria and then used it to evaluate these qualitative articles for investigative depth, interpretive adequacy, illumination and participatory accountability. In addition, assumptions are illustrated by examples taken from articles that concern false needs for consistency, completeness, and thematic reduction. Three practices for qualitative researchers in education are discussed as a consequence of this review and commentary.

Key words: core principles, new directions, practices; qualitative research published in *The Journal of Extension Research*; years 1992 to 2001

We were asked to review all qualitative research articles published in *The Journal of Extension Research* over a recent 10-year span (1992–2001). Although we look at individual articles to some part of the process, we concentrate mainly on them as a collective whole, to determine what the work tells us about how researchers have come to implement qualitative research in education. Our primary conclusion is that researchers in this journal and the *JER* editors evident progress very far in realizing the enormous potential of qualitative research in their studies. We have that we do not believe that that is the fault of individual researchers. In many ways, they faithfully followed a set of explicit and implicit standards that have been in place over at least the last 3 decades. If we want to see qualitative research reach its full potential as a method, we must grasp the root causes for the shortcomings.

Teaching-in-Role: A Different Approach to Developing Learning through Role-Play

Kate Collier

Abstract

It is usual in most role-play situations for the teacher to act as a facilitator who is responsible for preparing the role-play activity, running and de-briefing it. The roles that the tutor has to perform as a facilitator are identified by van Ments (1983) as being: "to choose and facilitate techniques, provide information, adjudicate on time, engender energy, correct problems and not act as a therapist" (p.120). Once the role-play has been set up and is running, the tutor usually tries to remain in the background observing what occurs and letting the participants grapple with the problems that emerge in the role-play situation. The tutor only intervenes when it is really necessary and is not usually perceived as being part of the role-play action. Another approach to the facilitation of role-play is for the tutor to adopt a role and become part of the role-play action. In drama-in-education this is known as adopting a 'teacher-in-role' approach. I have argued elsewhere (1998, 1999, 2000) that drama-in-education theory and practice can offer new insights into role-play practice and in the following chapter I will argue that the 'teacher-in-role' approach can provide role-play facilitators with a new perspective on developing learning through role-play.

Introduction

Role-play is a learning approach that encourages participants to explore different roles in a variety of contexts (Collier, 1999). Because it involves participants in responding 'as if' they were themselves or someone else in another situation, it requires them to employ imaginative speculation. It is this shifting of participants into the world of the imagination that aligns role-play with drama. The elements that characterise drama as an art form also relate to the characteristics of role-play. For example drama is rooted in the human context, in the exploration of roles and the relationship between those roles. It is driven by tension and directed by focus, which is made explicit through the manipulation of place, time, language, movement, mood and symbols. These elements together create dramatic meaning (O'Toole, & Haseman, 1986). These are also the elements that give role-play its structure and meaning. Drama-in-education is interested in how the elements of drama can be utilised to create learning possibilities; role-play has this learning focus as well.

Even though there are similarities between the elements of drama and those of role-play, they are both facilitated in different ways. In drama the tutor is seen as an important shaper of the dramatic event and therefore of the kind of learning that takes place within it. One of the ways that this is achieved is through the use of teacher-in-role as a way of introducing, driving and de-briefing the drama from within the dramatic situation.

This is in direct contrast to the low-key non-interventionist role usually adopted by role-play facilitators. There are exceptions to this however and van Ments (1983) notes that many tutors do deal with problems that occur in a role-play by "entering the action themselves and dealing with the problem from within a role" (p.125). He also suggests that this may not be the best approach and is one that inexperienced tutors may find difficult to utilise. Even the author who is an extremely experienced facilitator, only uses the 'teacher-in-role' approach sparingly.

In this chapter I will argue that the 'teacher-in-role' is as valid for facilitators of role-play as it is for drama-in-education practitioners and can provide a different perspective on how learning can be shaped in a role-play situation. In order to do this, I will explore the theory that supports this learning approach and provide an example of how it was used to develop learning in a interpersonal communication lesson for adult educators in a University context.

Teacher-in-role: a rationale for use

Readman (1994), a drama-in-education specialist, defines 'teacher-in-role' as all the occasions "when a teacher steps into someone else's shoes, either momentarily or for an extended period" (p.51). Once a teacher decides to do this they engage in imaginative speculation and become part of the dramatic action rather than adopting an outside observer's role. The teacher here has a dual role as they are taking part in the drama but are also monitoring the experiences of participants and helping to structure and develop the learning within the drama event.

Morgan & Saxton (1987) argue that the 'teacher-in-role' strategy has many advantages for the teacher and the student. For example, because the teacher is within the drama they can not only view what is happening but also be involved in its development. This can be achieved by the teacher controlling the pace and the tension of the dramatic event in order to prevent what van Ments (1983) sees as "a staleness" creeping into the work (p.122). In addition the teacher can keep the lines of communication open so all can work within a consensus.

There is also the opportunity for teachers to create new roles for themselves so that they can challenge the students to look at issues from a new perspective and thus deepen the learning possibilities inherent in the drama. Because they are no longer in the role of 'teacher' they can adopt low status roles such as a person who does not know the answers to a problem but sees the students as having the answers and being the experts.

Heathcote (1995) calls this practice of reversing the usual teacher /student roles as the 'mantle of the expert' approach. 'Teacher in role' is used as a means of changing the power relationships in the classroom so the students become the experts and the teacher the one who needs to learn more. This provides students with the opportunity to take responsibility, make decisions, and assume the leadership of the group as well as providing a context for them to express attitudes and points of view in the safety of the roles adopted. When the tutor decides to stay outside the drama as an independent observer, it can inhibit this kind of free expression as students are aware that they are being watched and monitored.

There are other process advantages to adopting a "teacher-in-role" approach. Taking part in a role-play signals to the students that you are willing to take risks as well and join them co-operatively in an imaginative learning adventure. It is also a quick and easy way to brief students about a role-play situation and to put them rapidly into role. Using "teacher-in-role" to initiate a role-play helps the group build up their belief in a situation and also allows you to model what is expected from them in a role-play. This can prevent misunderstandings about the need to have acting skills to do role-play or signal that this process is not about creating caricatures or stereotypes.

I will now present an example of a lesson where I incorporated 'teacher-in-role' as a learning strategy and demonstrate how these advantages operate in practice and indicate the way this can help the tutor develop learning within the role-play situation.

An example of 'teacher-in-role' in practice

The example I will be using to illustrate how 'teacher-in-role' can be used in practice is taken from a lesson from the 'Communication and Learning' subject on the Bachelor of Adult Education. This course is designed for trainers working in industry and in technical colleges and all students taking this course are mature and have a great deal of work experience behind them. Communication and Learning is a first year, first semester subject on interpersonal communication and its importance in training. As 'Communication and Learning' is about the dynamic, interactive, complex nature of human interaction, it was decided that the subject would utilise experiential learning strategies including role-play and that the assessment would involve small group presentations of one of the interpersonal communication topics.

The aim of this class was to reinforce work done earlier on different models of communication and their relevance to human interaction. It was also important however to introduce the group to case-studies because this is a strategy they will have to use themselves in future presentation work. In addition it was necessary to get the class used to working in groups (they haven't chosen who to work with in their presentation groups yet) and to presenting on a small scale.

The previous week I had given the students a case-study about the Arrow Group, an organisation that has serious communication problems. At the start of this next class I ask the students to get into small groups and discuss the case-study, identify the communication problems in the organisation and suggest some solutions. In order to motivate them to do this and put the learning into context I tell them that they are all organisational communication consultants and that they will be presenting their findings to a selection of staff and the management of the Arrow Group at a meeting set up for this purpose. I supervise the students in a "low key" manner whilst they prepare for their presentations. When the groups are ready, I indicate to the students that I am going to take on a role as well and will be responding as if I was the administrator employed by the Arrow group to facilitate the meeting between the group and the consultants. I tell them that when I stand at the back of the class the role-play will begin. I go into role and set the scene for the meeting making it clear what is going on and who is involved. I might say something like this:

"Welcome everyone to this special meeting of the Arrow Group. We are all here today to try and find out the reasons for the communication problems the company has been experiencing lately. Luckily we have five groups of consultants who have come along today to share their expertise with us and help us get back on our feet again."

I give each consultancy group a name such as 'Communication Works Ltd' and introduce each one in turn. I indicate that the members of the class who are watching each presentation are to become the management and staff members of the Arrow Group and are able to ask questions pertinent to them after the presentations. Thus the students have to take on dual roles because when they are not presenting they are members of the Arrow group.

This can be particularly useful for the students when they are reflecting later on what they have learnt from the experience as it encourages them to look at the problem from different aspects - that of the consultant or the management or worker from the Arrow Group. As the meeting administrator I can ensure that the meeting runs on time, organise the questions and answer sessions after the presentations and decide when to bring the meeting to a close. At this point I come out of role, move to a different part of the room to indicate this role

transition and tell the rest of the class that they should do this as well. I suggest that they also move to another chair or part of the room in order to make clear that this part of the role-play has been completed. I tell the students that we are now going to analyse the information we have received from the consultants in more detail and decide which of the presentations were most pertinent in terms of solving the organisational communication problems of the Arrow Group.

Students are then asked to form different small groups. I tell them that they are now going to take on the role of members of the Arrow Group workforce and that I am also going to take on another role. This time I will represent one of the management team responsible for the failed communication system that was put in place at the Arrow Group. I tell the class that when I go and sit behind the front desk I will take on this role and when I move from behind the desk I will come out of role again. Once in role I address the Arrow workforce in the following way:

"As members of the workforce you are all aware of the communication problems that we have experienced at Arrow Group. The management team must take much of the responsibility for the failure of the system that we put in place. That is why we brought in the consultants, here today, to help us solve our problems. One of the major problems identified already is the need for management to listen more to the views of the workforce and get feedback from them. Therefore we have decided to ask you to tell us which one of the consultant's presentations seems to offer the best approach to solving the Arrow Group's communication problems and why this is the case. We have set you up in groups so that you have the opportunity to discuss this issue, with others from the workforce, and decide which consultancy group should be employed to help Arrow in the future. I look forward to hearing your ideas on this after you have had fifteen minutes to come to a conclusion in your groups."

I would then, in role, either facilitate the feedback from the different groups or preferably get them to facilitate the feedback. In my role as manager I can still raise key questions that I think will challenge the thinking of the group or bring in new documentation that should have the same effect. For example I can introduce a memo from the management that emphasises the need for the Arrow Group to be aware of the cultural diversity in the workplace and make sure any new systems put into place address the needs of a diverse workforce.

Once the feedback from the workforce has been given, I bring the meeting to a close in my role as manager and signal that I am coming out of role by moving from behind the front desk. They also move places again to signal that the role-play has finished and that they have become students once more.

Now the final de-briefing begins. The students have already done a great deal of the de-briefing of the content of the case-study within the role-play scenario. In their roles as consultants and workforce members they have had to carefully analyse the case-study material and consider its implication for interpersonal communication. As a facilitator of the final part of this class, I am interested in helping students make connections with what they have experienced in the role-play and the theory they have studied on different models of communication. I also want them to make connections between what they have done in the role-play and the presentations they will be doing for their assessment in this subject.

I will ask the group to change the focus of their reflection and consider strategies that we have been using in class during this session and how they relate to their future group project assessment. I would also encourage students to move to yet another level of analysis and consider how what we have done in class relates to their workplace and their role as a trainer. This demonstrates the importance of my role as the facilitator outside the role-play as well as within it: I see the two approaches as complementary. Both are involved in different ways in structuring and focusing the learning that emerges from the role-play activity. The students

still have a significant input into what is learnt and can relate it to their own frameworks of understanding but it is the facilitator's job to help them find connections with the bigger learning picture. Role-play strategy values the students' diversity of ideas but also uses these as a platform for common understanding.

When I use the 'teacher-in-role' approach I am able to motivate student interest, have some control of the learning that takes place and have an opportunity for giving input within the drama rather than outside it. I can choose whether to take a low status, weak role in the drama or a high status, controlling role, which is similar to that adopted by more traditional teachers. I also give the student the 'mantle of the expert' (Heathcote 1976, 1995). This is when the students are placed in a role that requires them to be 'experts' in their field, in this case organisation communication consultants. Even when I adopt the apparently high status role as a manager, I purposely choose to be a failed manager who is looking to others for answers. Heathcote and other drama in education specialists (Bolton, 1995 and Neelands, 1992) argue that by doing this the students begin to believe in their role, gain confidence from it and respond accordingly, producing results that they would not be able to achieve out of role.

They are also prepared to take risks in role that they would not take in person because 'somebody else' is doing the presentations or making the decisions. The responsibility for what happens in a role-play is a second hand responsibility and in role-play, as in any other drama event, the consequences are not lasting. The foolish management decision in a role-play will not result, as it may in "real life" situations, in that person losing their job.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed that there should be a place in the facilitation of role-play for the tutor to take a part within the role-play as well as adopting the more usual outside observer role. I have suggested that the drama-in-education 'teacher-in-role' strategy can be a valuable resource for achieving this and shown how it can be utilised in an adult learning context.

Once again the connection has been made between drama-in-education and role-play. Because they share so many of the same elements it can be productive to see what drama can offer role-play practice. The 'teacher-in-role' approach is one approach that can be seen to enrich our perspective on the facilitation of role-play. It demonstrates that a facilitator need not always stand on the sidelines observing the action but can productively be part of the role-play action and the learning that takes place within it.

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Appendix 2

Drama Conventions – a quick reference guide

Mather (Turning Drama Conventions into Images, 1996-abridged version)

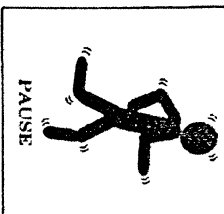
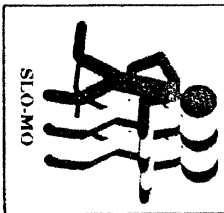
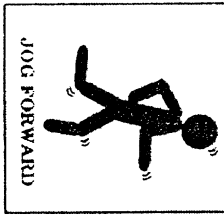
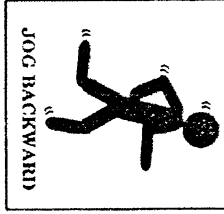
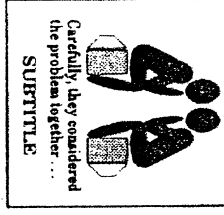
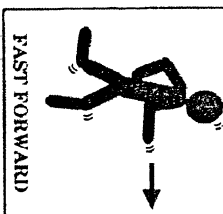
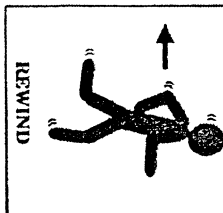
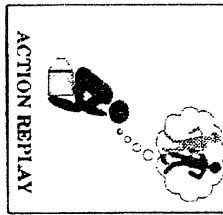
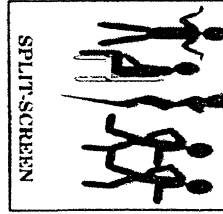
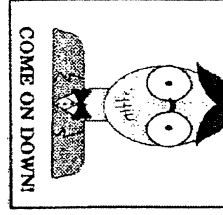
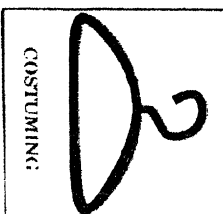
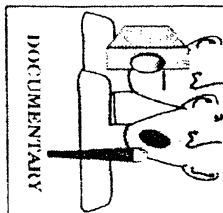
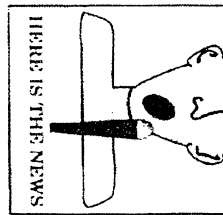
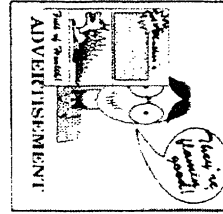
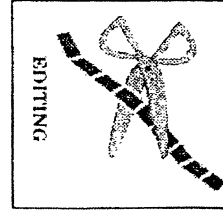


Farnborough School

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

"TELE/VIDEO" CONVENTIONS

RWM/93
Figure 5

	1	2	3	4	5
A	 PAUSE	 SLO-MO	 JOG FORWARD	 JOG BACKWARD	 Carefully, they considered the problem together... SUBTITLE
B	 FAST FORWARD	 REWIND	 ACTION REPLAY	 SPLIT-SCREEN	 COME ON DOWN!
C	 COSTUMING	 DOCUMENTARY	 HERE IS THE NEWS	 ADVERTISEMENT	 EDITING

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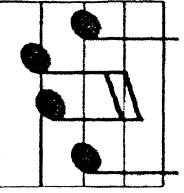


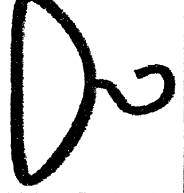
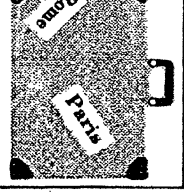
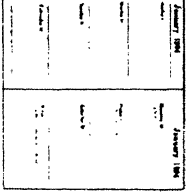
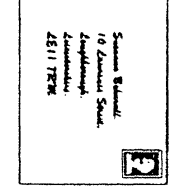
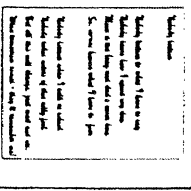
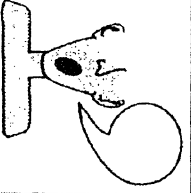
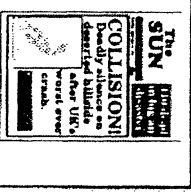
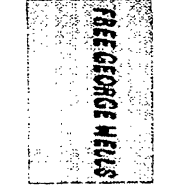

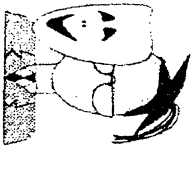
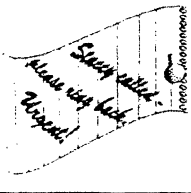
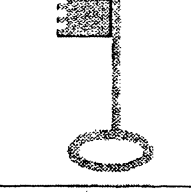


Farborough School

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

"MOOD-CREATING" CONVENTIONS

RWM/93
Figure 6

<p>A</p> <p>1</p> <p>SOUND-TRACKING</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>STILL IMAGES</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>NOISES OFF</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>COSTUMING</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>ARTEFACT</p> 
<p>B</p> <p>DIARY ENTRY</p> 	<p>LETTER</p> 	<p>POEM</p> 	<p>STATEMENT</p> 	<p>REPORTAGE</p> 
<p>C</p> <p>CHAPETTI</p> 	<p>ROLE-ON-THE-WALL</p> 	<p>TEACHER-IN-ROLE</p> 	<p>NOTE</p> 	<p>SYMBOLS</p> 

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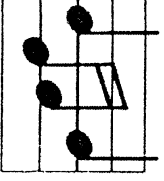
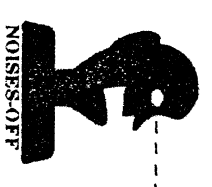
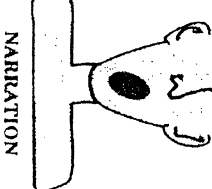
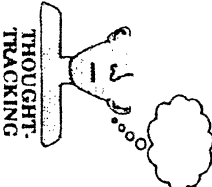
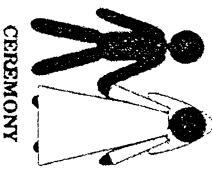


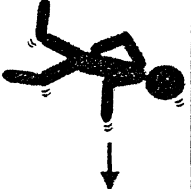



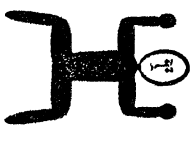
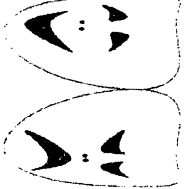
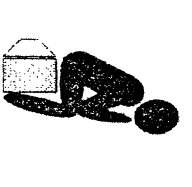
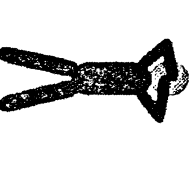


Far Harbor School

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

"SOUND/MOVEMENT" CONVENTIONS

RWM/93
Figure 7

<p>A</p> <p>SOUND-TRACKING</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>NOISES-OFF</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>NAVIGATION</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>THOUGHT-TRACKING</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>CEREMONY</p> 
<p>B</p> <p>JOG-FORWARD</p> 	<p>JOG-BACKWARD</p> 	<p>FAST-FORWARD</p> 	<p>REWIND</p> 	<p>ACTION REPLAY</p> 
<p>C</p> <p>RITUAL</p> 	<p>MIME</p> 	<p>MASKS</p> 	<p>SCULPT</p> 	<p>STILL IMAGE</p> 

Drama Conventions, Carey 1995, Drama Vol.4, No.1

Resources Pull-out

This is the eighth in our series of centre-page-pull-out examples of drama practice. Each of the pull-outs illustrates the planning and practice of a range of drama practitioners working in a wide variety of contexts.

The series has its own page numbering system independent of that used in the rest of **DRAMA** so that readers who may wish to remove the centre page spread can do so without losing the numerical paging order of the main journal. This system also allows for the sequential storage of pull-outs separate from **DRAMA**.

If you would like to contribute either a single or a series of sessions please contact the **DRAMA** editor giving details of your area of interest, an outline of the work offered and a proposed layout.

The last edition of **DRAMA** contained a planning model for Drama in which a number of conventions were referred to. This is the second part of the Pull-out containing outlines of the conventions used.

DRAMA CONVENTIONS

A Quick Reference Guide

The following list of Conventions is a quick reference guide to the main ways of working identified in the planning model. If you would like to gain greater insight into the origins and uses of conventions please refer to the book by Jonothan Neelands and Tony Goode: *Structuring Drama Work - A Handbook of Available Forms*, which provides the most authoritative and readable explanation of Drama Conventions and their relationship to drama form to date.

The conventions are listed alphabetically within the phases of the Planning Model.

PHASE 1 - Building the Context - GETTING THEM INTERESTED

1. Collective Drawing

As a group participants create or represent a role or place by drawing a picture, in as much or as little detail as they wish, that holds the shared understandings they have at the time. The picture can be supplemented with statements that give more detail and express feelings, thoughts or opinions held by or about the role or place. (See Role on the Wall for a further development).

2. Defining the Space

The real space that the group are working in is re-arranged to represent the key features of the fictional place in which the drama is to happen.

3. Diaries, Letters, Journals

These speak for themselves but a further development could be to leave them incomplete as this in itself creates the need to find out more!

4. Hot Seating

A person is questioned in role by the rest of the group who are out of role in order that all of the participants may have a shared understanding of the characters background, attitudes, motives, values etc.

5. Maps, Diagrams

These can be pre-prepared or created by the participants as a way of gaining a graphic understanding of the 'place' the drama is to happen in.

6. Role on the Wall

In this a central character is represented by a picture/photograph which is pinned to the wall so that its presence is always felt. If the group have created a role (see Collective Drawing) this can be added to as their understanding and knowledge grow.

Phase 3 - Introducing the Problem - Testing Commitment Getting Engagement

1. Forum Theatre

A small group act out a drama for the rest of the group as 'observers'. Both the 'performers' and the 'observers' have the right to stop the drama at any point and: make suggestions as to how it might proceed; ask for it to be replayed with changes designed to bring out another point of view or focus; deepen the drama by using any other of the conventions. An important feature is that all the participants, 'performers' and 'observers', take responsibility for the crafting of the drama- the responsibility does not lie solely with the 'performers' in fact they are more like puppets responding to their puppeteers.

2. Headlines

Statements in the style of newspaper headlines are used to focus the attention onto a particular aspect of the drama. Used with Still Photographs several Headlines can be given for the same photograph in order to highlight points of view and bias.

3. Letters

Delivered by the teacher/leader to either the whole group or to small sub-groups in order to introduce a new idea, focus or tension to the existing drama. The participants can write them both in and out of role as a means of crystallising thought or reflecting on past action.

4. Meetings

(See Phase 2 No.2 for details) By introducing this convention at this point in a drama the teacher/leader has the opportunity to use the controls inherent in a formal meeting structure in order to raise the level of tension felt by the group both within the fiction and in reality.

5. Overheard Conversations

(See Phase 2 No. 3 for details) By enabling the participants to listen into a private conversation the teacher/leader can introduce a new idea or, in the case of our planning model, a threat or problem by creating rumour that will be interpreted in a variety of ways.

6. Re-enactments

In order to examine a situation in more detail a scene, that has 'already happened', may be re-enacted. If this is linked into the idea of clarification of fact or confirmation of the source of a rumour it can provide a very powerful focus for checking and confirming the whole group's growing understanding of a given situation.

7. Reportage

Participants report on a situation in the style of a journalist either from within the drama in role or outside of it out of role. The journalist can work in any media form.

Phase 4 - Reflecting and Reviewing - RELATING FICTION TO REALITY

1. Conflicting Advice

Characters are offered conflicting advice as to what to do about any given situation. This can be done in role by other characters in the drama and by voices in the character's head played by other members of the group. It is possible to develop this convention by allowing the character to engage in conversation with the voices and thus challenge the advice being offered; also the voices themselves may engage in debate with the character listening in.

2. Doubling

This involves a person other than the one playing the character as an extension of that character. The double's main function is to express the *feelings* of the character. This is clearly a very stylised technique designed to deepen the collective understanding of how a character might be feeling about a given situation even though the character itself may not be able to express those feelings. Very effective when used in conjunction with Hot Seating.

3. Forum Theatre

(See Phase 3 No.1 for details)

Planning Drama

7. Soundtracking

Sounds are used to create the atmosphere of the 'place' in which the drama takes place. These can be pre-recorded or live and are usually, though not always, created by the participants.

8. Still Photographs

Participants create a 'photograph' using their own bodies to represent a moment from the drama. Combined with Soundtracking, Thought-tracking, Speech Bubbles or Thought Bubbles this convention can be used in a variety of different circumstances. Try linking two or more together as a way of developing a narrative sequence or predicting possible outcomes.

9. Unfinished Materials

The group is presented with a piece of writing, a drawing, a diagram, an audio or video tape which is incomplete - their task is to complete it or solve the problem as to why it has not been finished.

PHASE 2 - Developing the Narrative - DEEPENING COMMITMENT

1. Interviews, Interrogations

Characters are interviewed by 'reporters' or interrogated by an authority figure in order to question their motives, values, beliefs or to elicit more facts about a given situation.

2. Meetings

The group get together in order to address some problem or to discuss information within the format of a formal meeting. This is also very useful for the teacher to input information or inject tension within the fiction rather than stopping the drama in order to do so.

3. Overheard Conversations

The group 'listen in' to 'private' conversations between characters in the drama. An interesting and challenging development of this is for the group to agree whether or not the information gained from listening in can be used in the subsequent drama or is it something they must pretend not to know.

4. Narration

One of the participants tells the story whilst the others 'act it out' or a series of scenes are linked by narrative which can either simply tell the story or, more importantly, comment on the action from a particular point of view.

5. Small Group Drama

Sub-groups of the whole class work on separate but related interpretations or developments of the major theme. These can subsequently be shared if there is a need for a small group's understanding to become part of that of the large one.

6. Still Photographs/Video Pause

(See also Phase 1 No.7) The Still Photo is developed to include the convention of a Freeze Frame or Pause in the action, as if on a video recorder. This allows the group to examine a particular moment in more detail.

7. Telephone Conversations

The listeners hear either one side of the conversation only or both sides depending on the intention of those using the convention. The teacher leader can also use this to add information, develop the narrative or inject tension from within the fiction.

8. Thought Tracking

The inner thoughts of a character are revealed either by the person adopting that role or by the others in the group. This is a particularly useful way of slowing down and deepening a drama especially if used in conjunction with Still Photographs. A further development of this is to have the participants draw the distinction between what a role says; what it thinks and what it feels.

9. Whole Group Drama

All of the participants, including, usually, the teacher/leader, are engaged in the same drama at the same time (see also Meetings).

Planning Drama

4. Group Sculpture

The group, or an individual from the group, creates a shape using members of the group and any other, usually of a non-representational nature, which expresses a particular aspect of the theme or issue being addressed. The collective creation of another art form will force the group to bring out their own, individual interpretation of events portrayed in the drama. This is not to be confused with Still Photographs which tend to be representational.

5. Magic Shop

This convention exists outside of the fiction of the main drama but within a fiction of its own. The group are asked to imagine a shop and that in this shop a wide variety of qualities are to be found. A character or group of characters from the main drama is asked to name their heart's desire. The payment cannot be in money but the character(s) must be prepared to leave behind a quality that they have which will be useful to someone else coming to the shop in the future. The act of bartering which goes on between the teacher/leader as shopkeeper and the character(s) provides a very strong focus for both the clarification of goals and an examination of the consequences of the character's actions and choices.

6. Marking the Moment

Used in this Phase of drama activity to allow the participants to reflect on a time within the drama in which strong reactions, emotions or feelings were felt by the individuals within the group. They are reflecting out of role and so the reactions identified are those of the participants themselves, not the characters they were playing. They use any of the other conventions suitable for sharing the moment with the rest of the group.

7. Moment of Truth

A technique in which the group must devise a final scene for the drama. They must engage in reflective discussion of the major events and tensions in order to create a sharp focus for the final scene.

There are two further approaches which underpin much successful drama activity:

1. Teacher in Role

Expressed in its simplest form the teacher/leader takes part in the drama along with the other participants. Teachers often feel extremely reticent, for a variety of reasons, about joining in alongside the children but there is no doubt at all (see *Drama Broadsheet Vol.7 Issue3 "Teacher in Role and Classroom Power"*) that children respond very positively indeed to their teacher becoming part of the shared act of creating a drama.

2. Mantle of the Expert

The major feature of this convention is that the pupils are enrolled as characters with specialist knowledge relevant to the situation they find themselves in. In its purest form Mantle of the Expert requires an approach to teaching and learning that is holistic and therefore cross-curricular however I have found that endowing pupils with expertise is in itself extremely powerful, motivating and empowering.

Readers wishing to know more are referred to accounts of the work of Dorothy Heathcote *Dorothy Heathcote, Collected Writings* edited by Liz Johnson and Cecily O'Neill; *Drama as a Learning Medium* by B.J. Wagner and more recently to the excellent *Drama for Learning; Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton/Heinemann ISBN 0-435-08643-X [An extended discursive review of this book will appear in the next edition of the journal. Ed]

Afterword

I should like to make it clear to those readers sceptical of what now has, dubiously, become known as the 'conventions approach' to drama that I am not advocating a piecemeal and disjointed means of creating and using drama. I am definitely supporting the use of conventions as the basic building blocks of effective drama along with developing children's understanding of the structure of the art form of drama including focus, tension, contrast and symbolisation. I have found this approach to be very accessible to children of all ages and if we are to provide learning opportunities for children to develop the facility to create and use drama they must have a language with which to talk about it—a 'language' that also helps them in assessing and evaluating drama.

John Carey

Drama Conventions, Owens and Barber, 1997, Dramaworks

Drama conventions

As we have already said, a drama convention is a way of organising time, space and action to create meaning. It allows all members of the group to participate in the drama in an organised and creative way. Different conventions also allow for different levels of participation which often means that at one end of the scale individuals can participate and contribute without feeling that they have to do anything embarrassing. At the same time, other individuals can take on a big personal challenge.

A group experienced in drama will be able to suggest conventions that would be useful to develop the drama. It is important to share these terms with the group from their first drama session. In this way they will be able to make suggestions about form as well as content, and will be improving their drama and theatre skills, knowledge and understanding.

The conventions themselves are drawn from a wide range of sources, theatrical, literary, psychological, therapeutic, the arts, etc. They have been in existence for many years. For the purposes of the book, the conventions have been classified into either those used for *Making* or those used for *Reflecting and Evaluating*. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Where a convention is known by a number of names, they have all been given.

Making -

hooking interest, establishing the content, building commitment and developing engagement.

Games:

played together to focus attention, calm down or wake up, to reinforce, or make concrete concepts, to reveal the game structure found in situations, eg. "Tee-ak-e-allo" in *Gangs* (page 94).

Narrative/voice-over:

commentary/narration: by the leader or a group member over or in front of the action to create atmosphere, give information, help reflection or move the drama

on in time, control the action, etc. In its simplest form narration can be used to control the action, e.g. *The Fairground Travellers began slowly to pack away their stalls for the last time.* in *Rogan's Fair* (page 45)

Supporting sound/sound tracking:

sounds made using voice/body/instruments which are then used to support action. This may be recorded or done live to create atmosphere, consolidate the context, usually used to fit part of the drama, e.g. music for the arrival on the planet in *Space Mission* (page 70).

Hot spot/hot seating:

the group interviews a person in role (the groups may also be in role or not) to build characters, clarify perspectives and the context.

Still images, freeze frame, frozen image, tableau, set in concrete, photo album:

groups or individuals get into a frozen position which may be looked at, and read, by others to focus closely on one moment or to physically express an abstract concept. The images might be presented as part of the drama as, for example, a photo that has been found, a painting, a sculpture, a statue. This is a very versatile convention and can be used as a form of work in its own right e.g. in *To be or not to be* (page 82) the group form the scene of the murder.

Interviews/interrogations:

in pairs or groups to give or gain information and build roles. Examples include detectives, scientists, TV researchers, barristers, members of a jury, oral history, etc.

Mind parts:

the group are invited to become various parts of a role or character's mind. The conflict within the mind is deconstructed and the various elements within it identified. The group then choose which element they would like to play. The individual playing the role then stands in the middle of these elements. When she points to an element, that group gives all the reasons why she should act as they wish. As soon as she drops her hand, they must fall silent, even in mid sentence. The role can keep on pointing and listening until she feels a decision can be made. This can be a powerful way to build commitment using teacher in role in the middle of the circle, e.g. *To be or not to be* (page 85).

Reconstruction/re-run/re-enactment:

the whole group, or small groups, or pairs carefully reconstruct an incident to explore its dynamics and tensions as in real life crime programmes on TV e.g. 'Crimewatch'. Separate re-enactments could be done from different viewpoints.

Hidden thoughts/speech bubbles/thought-tracking:

one person moves and speaks in role whilst the other speaks the subtext, i.e. what the person is really thinking but cannot say. This helps build roles and reveals dynamics and tensions of the situation. Alternatively, one person can be frozen while the rest of the group are asked if they will individually pass behind this character and speak their thoughts at that particular moment.

TV/radio & newspaper reports/coverage/media reports:

events are interpreted or approached through the conventions of TV/radio/newspaper headlines etc. This can build context by revealing different perspectives, e.g. the finding of the maze in *The Amazing Maze* (page 34).

Mini productions/teams/small group playmaking/improvisation:

the group splits into small groups to demonstrate alternative understandings which may or may not be shared. This can help build roles and situations and can be combined effectively with teacher in role or used as a means of making a statement about the action as performance.

Parallel story/analogy:

the class works as a whole group or in small groups through parallel situations that mirror themes and dynamics in the agreed area to be explored. This requires and encourages objectivity, e.g. *The Rains* (page 109).

Mantle of the expert/the ones who know:

there are various levels at which this convention can be explored. At its simplest, pupils are endowed with specialist knowledge e.g. designers (as in *The Amazing Maze*) or historians. When used in full form, specialist knowledge is not endowed but slowly built through carefully identified tasks which require the gathering of more and more knowledge. This task-driven form of drama builds up strong commitment and belief in roles and situation and can become a form of work in itself.

Simulations:

this emphasises the importance of facts and previously identified dynamics rather than creating drama based on individual and group imagination. Useful in providing background to situation, e.g. if a project on unemployment is producing only stereotypical responses to perceived problems, the drama is shelved for a session and an exercise set up in which the weekly allowance is given to family units, plus a list of their bills. What can they afford to eat that week? A list of current prices is provided. Chance cards with additional financial demands are dropped in, e.g. 'It's one of the family's birthday.' The following session, the group returns to the drama with the insights gained from the simulation.

Defining space:

the action is located in a particular space and defined by an agreed method as the confined space of the squirrel's home in *The Rains* (page 109) is defined by a piece of cloth - a room may be built up with the names of individual features and objects written on small scraps of paper. At its simplest, furniture can be rearranged to represent objects or locations.

Partner-in-role:

another teacher/parent/senior pupil provides the focus for the drama. Information is let out very slowly by the role who carefully listens to contributions by the group and responds to signals from the actual teacher. The group are aware of the person playing the role and may well know them, but that person does not come out of role. The teacher uses the dynamic of the space between the group and the role to create tension as implications are carefully explored. The partnership is between the teacher who is controlling the action and the partner who is acting as the live focus. A partner in role is used simply but effectively in *Space Mission* (page 66).

Costuming:

can be used to hook interest, generate questioning and build belief particularly when used in a partner-in-role situation. The costume itself may be read in a way which begins to suggest a story about the way a person lives, e.g. a simple sword and cloak are used in *To be or not to be* (page 74).

Official messages, letters, diaries, journals, documents:

these can allow movement away from the immediate action of the drama and provide opportunities for the consolidation of individual roles. They can also be used

to initiate drama as they provide excellent opportunities for thoughtful, well focused problems to be set in context. They can be written in or out of role. Information technology can be very effective, e.g. taped messages or 'last recordings', photographs, video recordings, word processed documents which could, for example, add authenticity to an official letter, see *Rogan's Fair* (pages 59 & 60) for an example.

Listening in/eavesdropping/overheard conversations:

the majority of the group listen to a spontaneous or rehearsed conversation between a pair or smaller group. This provides an opportunity to explore different perceptions of the same event. It can add tension as well as feeding information into the drama.

Drawing maps & diagrams:

a collective activity which can be teacher or group led. It can allow the implications of a particular situation to be carefully explored in visual form at the beginning of, or during the drama, e.g. in *Rogan's Fair* (pages 61 & 62) a plan of the field and scale drawings of the fairground rides are used.

Captions/titles:

a phrase/thought/slogan/graffiti is written large on paper and presented with the action of a particular group. The relationship between the physical action and the written word can have its own resonance, e.g. in *The Amazing Maze*, ten years are spent building a maze (page 37). The group is asked to present a series of images to illustrate this and to give a further insight by giving each image a caption e.g. 'Children are born and grow yet still the work goes on'.

Off-stage pressure:

tension is provided by a force/ power/ person who will soon arrive but is not yet present. This can give impetus to a task which needs completing or a decision which must be made before this arrival, *Space Mission* (page 66) uses this convention.

Role-swaps:

at a key moment in the drama, roles are reversed in order to explore the predicament from a totally different perspective.

Forum theatre:

an event/scene is recreated in detail and then replayed. If anyone feels that they would have acted differently at a specific moment within that scene, they put up their hand. The scene is rewound in order for them to step into the action and try their theoretical idea out in practice. The scene can be fast forwarded/slowed down, new characters can be introduced in order to explore the situation. This can be used a form of work in itself.

Artefacts/unfinished materials:

Useful for generating questions to start a piece of drama or to introduce tension during it, e.g. the map in *Rogan's Fair*.

Game shows:

the group agree to explore a difficult issue through a game show format, e.g. in *Rogan's Fair* (page 45) one member of the group could become a game show host. The contestants have to remember what they have seen on a conveyor belt. This is replaced by remembering all the names they have been called, usually as a travelling family. The rest of the group becomes the audience on 'Guess that Prejudice'. The juxtaposition of form and content can be used to start or reflect on a drama.

Teacher-in-role:

a major convention which allows the teacher to challenge, support and develop the drama, and individuals in it, from within the drama. It does not involve the teacher acting but does require conviction and the adoption of an attitude that can be shown in action. Useful in allowing the teacher to encourage the group to see the possibilities of the 'game' of drama.

Telephone talking distance communications:

two people speak together with the group as audience. To clarify and control the action, introduce new roles, create tension.

Meetings:

where the space is organised in an agreed way and a procedure established for communication to take place. This allows information to be fed in, problems to be debated, roles clarified and built, e.g. a group of protesters, pirates, police conspirators, concerned members of the public, or the ride operators in *Rogan's Fair* (page 45).

Collective role:
Often at the start of a drama, participants adopt a 'collective role'. For example, they all become astronauts. The emphasis here is often on establishing the situation, focus and perspective through a general role experience. As the drama progresses, participants are encouraged to make these roles more specific or to adopt others in which they see potential, e.g. *Space Mission* (page 66).

Computer input:
An individual, or small group, or the teacher programmes the computer to give an input to the drama. For example, a communication may suddenly start printing out at a moment in the drama which serves to increase tension and focus activity.

Metamorphosis:
The group or individuals can become inanimate objects. This is useful for defining space and giving detail to location. It allows commentary to be made from a different perspective, e.g. *'What would be in the old woman's attic when the students entered? In groups of two or three, find a way of representing a specific object they might find'*.

Reflecting and Evaluating

Drawing together/collective drawing:
The whole group draw on a very large sheet of paper (pieces taped together) or all contribute to it over a period of time, to pool ideas, share perceptions, consolidate the context.

Dance past:
Two people are asked to represent the protagonists in a pivotal moment in the drama. The group is then asked if, individually, they would like to take it in turn to model that volunteer into a physical position which they feel literally or abstractly represents their emotional state. When a number of modellings have taken place, the two volunteers are asked to remember the four positions which really captured how this character was feeling.

The group is then split in two and half goes with one volunteer, half with the other. The volunteer then repeats the four physical positionings and then runs them together with link movements to form a short dance/movement phrase. All of the

half-group then learns this phrase and practises moving it across the room. When both groups are ready, they stand at opposite sides of the room and rehearse simply walking the way they will move past each other to get to the opposite side of the room.
After the rehearsal, music and lighting can be added as the two emotions dance past each other. Just before they do this, they are asked to reflect on the feelings and emotions they experience as they dance past the others.

Ceremonial action/rituals & ceremonies:
To show or create a set of repeatable actions, gestures, visual statements that are part of a specific culture or are particular to one person or group of people. They may be devised to honour specific events or may be observable parts of life. These may be rituals of an opening ceremony, e.g. *The Amazing Maze* (page 37).

Marking the moment/where were you?
Each person in the drama is asked to go to the exact place where they felt a significant moment occurred for them in the drama. Some of these can be shared or people can be encouraged to reflect on why this was significant for them. A useful way of reflecting on a session or for gathering thoughts when continuing a drama performance a week later.

Role-on-the-wall/outline of a person:
Draw around a student on a large sheet of paper and use the outline to represent a character in the drama. Facts or characteristics known or perceived are drawn around or in the shape. It can be useful to contrast the outer impressions with the inner truths which are represented so graphically. Individuals can play this collectively agreed-upon figure. This convention features in *To be or not to be* (page 80).

Montage:
Selected images, sounds and movements are juxtaposed to evoke feelings and thoughts generated in a drama. Useful in consolidating work or reflecting upon

Mask:
Can provide a protected way into drama. The making of these allows discussion to take place prior to the action and reduces possible perceived threats. Also a distancing device.

Puppets:
again a safe way into drama work which allows time for discussion during the making process. Also a distancing device.

Empty chair:
place a chair in the centre of a circle. Agree upon and then envisage a chosen character sitting in it. The group asks questions of him/her. The group answers its own questions through the chair, being sensitive to the logic and consistency of the replies.

Two groups-two people:
split the group. One person faces the other whilst the rest of the class stand in two groups (one group behind each individual). The two groups must whisper what they want their individual to say to the other individual. The individual is a mouthpiece for one group. This allows a large group to shape a conversation between two people.

Echo:
the physical setting is the same as 'Two groups - two people', but in this convention the group is the mouthpiece of the individual and can only act as an echo. Useful in building up tension in a conversation between two people which actually involves a whole group. To add tension, the individuals and the groups can physically move towards each other during the conversation. The two individuals at the front of each group lead the speeches which must be in short phrases or sentences to work.

Song:
taped or sung live, this can be used to complement or provide a contrast to action or to reflect on or in a drama, e.g. songs could be written in groups to commemorate key moments in the history of the maze in *The Amazing Maze* (page 34).

Sculpture:
one person models an image by physically manipulating an individual or group of individuals. Useful in exploring individual perceptions and can be developed by subsequently exploring 'ideal' images and the realistic possibilities of transition between them and those first created. Much of the value of this convention lies in the rest of the group reading the image, i.e. saying what information and/or feeling this gives them.

Tunnel of decision/conscience corridor/conscience alley:
the group form two parallel lines and try to verbally influence the decision of the individual who walks down the alley between them. By the time the individual reaches the end of the alley/corridor, she or he must have decided on a course of action in response to arguments /chants/ pleas. Useful in consolidating individuals' decisions, thoughts and feelings.

Either/or:
ask the group to choose between two options which in effect divide the class in half, e.g. 'If you think you would rush and get help, sit on the right of the room. If you think you would attempt a rescue yourself, sit on the left.' This is useful for managing the drama and creating two audiences. Most importantly, it gives the group the opportunity to see that they can determine the direction of the drama. This has to be true, as they all may decide to sit on one side of the room and developments accordingly take place from there. This convention is used to influence the outcome in *The Rains* (page 114).

Continuum:
draw an imaginary line down the centre of the room and place the word 'Yes' at one end of the room and 'No' at the opposite. Place a chair to the side of the room at mid point on the continuum. Ask anyone who wants to, to stand on the chair and ask any question relating to a character or issue that they would like to ask. The rest of the group must then move to yes or no or some point in between on the continuum. This is a useful way to allow individuals to make statements without having to defend them verbally. It allows the group to see physically and visually that there are many differences of opinion in a group, e.g. in *The Rains* (page 109) 'Do you think that animals are better companions than humans?'

Moving sculpture/scenescence machine:
one person is invited to walk into the centre of the room and start repeating a small piece of movement (with repeated words or sounds). One by one, the others join in this moving and audible sculpture. This convention can move responses away from the literal to the abstract and conceptual.

Mime:
individuals or small groups communicate with the rest of the group using their body

rather than words. This can encourage participation for those who feel unsure of speaking e.g. when choosing roles in a group of Elizabethan travelling players, each person mimes what they do, (juggle etc) and the rest of the group quickly guess. Mime is used to establish identities and atmosphere in *To be or not to be* (page 77).

If you find yourself using a particular structuring technique in drama, add your own convention to the list, but remember that planning a pretext requires more thought than simply listing a string of conventions.

Appendix 3

Newspaper Stimulus

Yuppies Go Home !

Tension between local residents of Darlinghurst, East Sydney and the trendy newcomers to the area, is evident in the graffiti on the sides of houses. 'Yuppies get lost', 'Leave Locals in Peace', are the messages that are being forcibly put across.

Local residents are angry at the way new houses are being bought up and done up by the rich and trendy. Estate agents admit that prices are booming and business is brisk. Locals complain that they are being pushed out of an area that they have lived in all their lives by incomers who force up the prices in shops and restaurants and cause an increase in the rent of local accommodation.

'We can't afford to live here any more,' says one resident. Builders argue that if the market is there for renovated houses it's their job to make sure they provide them for customers regardless of what this might do to the local community. Restaurant owners and shops say business has never been so good and accuse local residents of whinging. Locals say the whole character of the area and its community spirit has been ruined by flashy upstarts and heartless profiteers.