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Sociodrama in education.

Ronald W. Simmons

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SOCIODRAMA IN EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented
by
Ronald W. Simmons

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Education Doctorate

December 1971
Ronald W. Simmons, Ed.D.

This dissertation is concerned with helping students and teachers to reach certain concerns about school relations. Sociodrama is used as a method of dramatization to have students visualize and solve group problems related to issues. This dissertation also attempts to illustrate how sociodrama can be used effectively in various areas of education, such as teacher training, social studies, and counseling.

Many examples are presented as evidence of the possibilities for sociodrama in education. Sociodrama is used in each group to find a common problem to be dramatized. Then the particular problem was set by the group leader, who briefly describes the problem. Students then dramatize the problem, rate the performances using spontaneity testing. Finally, students may discuss the dramatization and ratings.

This dissertation demonstrates that sociodrama is extremely helpful to foster more productive human relations in education. Educators, once familiar with sociodramatic techniques, become more adept at offering alternatives.
SOCIODRAMA IN EDUCATION

A Dissertation

By

Ronald W. Simmons

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Dr. Gloria Joseph, Chairman

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Professor George Urch, Member

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February, 1972
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INTRODUCTION

SOCIOEDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION

An almost insurmountable task confronts modern educators concerned about the quality of education in metropolitan areas. These innovative persons must identify and cope with myriad problems. Instruction is a primary consideration. Yet several major problems, tangential to instruction, now exist.

Perhaps race is the most significant of these problems in that American society can be termed racist. All American institutions should not be judged as racist, but many of these institutions exhibit a type of racism that is greater than the individuals who make up the institutions. This institutional racism is manifested and perpetuated by the rules, traditions, established behavior patterns and informal codes by which institutions are maintained and it reflects the entrenched and pervasiveness of racism in the society at large. Institutional racism is thus able to affect the relationship of individuals within the institution, including the relationship between teacher and student, regardless of their individual bias or thought. Consequently, interaction between teacher and student as individuals may be complicated by race.

Indeed, institutional racism discriminates against the black, the poor, and the uneducated. This discrimination, when carried out by social institutions such as schools, results in
maintaining poverty, miseducation, bad housing, lack of employment opportunities, and poor health, and thus can be termed oppression. This oppression is ingrained so deeply in American society, and thus in American education, that our entire method of instruction must be revamped.

Various methods of instruction, i.e., role-playing, microteaching, and discovery, attempt to allow students freedom from the confinement of that oppression. New schools using the Montessori method, the British Infant School Design or other similar methods are being tried in Philadelphia, Burlington, Chicago, and Hartford. These schools attempt to alter the relationship between student and teacher so that it is not detrimental to the learning style of the individual and certainly not oppressive.

There is a certain irrelevancy about most public schools in urban areas, epitomized by the massive drop-out rate from these schools. Many students are disturbed and disappointed with schools that deprive them of self-respect and some control of the school program. Sociodrama, which may be considered a form of counseling, identifies many of these student difficulties.

Sociodrama, a method of group counseling that allows problems to be dramatized and solved, is also an appropriate method of instruction that alters the relationship between student (object) and teacher (subject). Sociodrama allows the teacher to interact with the students and avoid the role of disciplinarian, instructor, and omnipotent leader. Its emphasis
on student input is also useful in revamping the curriculum.

Sociodrama is a program that can fuse the hopes of floundering students and teachers for more productive and rewarding interpersonal relations. Although it is hardly a panacea for social ills, sociodrama is an important contribution toward alleviating many interpersonal difficulties resulting from social problems.

This thesis will attempt to demonstrate various types of sociodrama used with both teachers and students for instruction. Teacher training workshops for race relations and black history are two course settings for sociodrama.

Most importantly, through sociodrama, society may take a new look at Black America. Sociodrama will be used in this thesis to demonstrate how to change a negative view of black Americans through peer evaluation and illustrative techniques. However, this thesis is only a beginning. No single program could hope to ameliorate all of the problems associated with race.

Chapter I of this thesis is an attempt to deal with some fundamental issues in education. Tantamount among these fundamental educational concerns is the relationship between teacher and student and the effect of that relationship on the type of instruction that is associated with public school education, i.e., often impersonal, dehumanizing, and oppressive.

Chapter I also discusses the importance of sociodrama and its utility as an alternative to traditional instruction. Sociodrama, a dramatization and problem-solving technique used
by groups, can prove to be important in changing the relationship between the teacher as the dominant force in education and the student as the submissive (passive) element in that process. Previous literature on sociodrama reflects many problems related to instruction.

Chapter II discusses previous literature on sociodrama. Part of the problem with sociodrama has been that it has failed to meet the needs of non-white students. It has not been successfully used by a segment of the public school population that might benefit most. Another problem with the literature is that it has failed to distinguish sociodrama, psychodrama and role-playing. Without these distinctions, any meaningful discussion on sociodrama or an attempt at an application of sociodramatic techniques is meaningless. Chapter III attempts to ameliorate much of the confusion about sociodrama through illustration.

Chapter III is an attempt to apply sociodramatic research and philosophy to some of the problems of education. Case 1 deals with some race problems of black and white teachers in an urban school. Using spontaneity testing and role inventory (a group testing device), participants attempted to examine attitudes and concerns. Cases 2 and 8 attempt to demonstrate the feasibility of using sociodrama in conjunction with history to improve relations in the classroom. Cases 3, 5, and 6 attempt to demonstrate that sociodrama can be used to reach the learners' concerns and help the learner solve troublesome problems.
Case 4 is an attempt to use art as a warm-up device to encourage racial pride and discussion of racial problems.

Case 7 uses the Magic Shop technique as a warm-up device to reach certain concerns.

Case 9 uses sociodrama and role reversal for problem-solving. Unlike previous cases, however, sociodrama is used with role reversal in this case as an illustrative device to "teach" children the importance of racial understanding and harmony. Case 10 demonstrates the importance of sociodrama as a training technique for beginning teachers in the classroom.

Chapter III demonstrates the effective use of sociodrama in all aspects of education. Sociodrama can make an important contribution when used in counseling, teacher preparation, and the social studies.

Chapter IV provides an overview of sociodrama in education. In Chapter IV, the writer discusses the importance of a new direction for social studies research and literature and the contribution of this thesis to that goal. Sociodrama in Education demonstrates the application of that new social science attitude toward solving problems in education.
CHAPTER I

OPPRESSION AND THE
OPPRESSED IN EDUCATION

Dehumanization in our public schools affects the very fiber of American education. Dehumanization, which can be aptly called the mechanization of learning, is a manifestation of an oppressive American society. This dehumanization has resulted in the miseducation of hundreds of thousands of children annually. Many factors are involved in the dehumanization process.

The nature of the dehumanization process reflects an inexcusable and abhorrent relationship between student and teacher. The relationship is fundamentally rooted in the oppression of the student, ignoring his individuality and worth. It is with some trepidation and regretment that this dehumanizing condition is recognized by administrators, teachers, and other educators. Yet their ever-increasing awareness is coupled with an unwillingness to take definitive action, and thus indicates the nature of the problem - the status quo must be maintained. Humanizing education should be the priority today.

The dehumanizing process is peculiarly American in some respects but universal in others. Perhaps the most significant statement concerning this oppression is contained in Freire's Pedagogy and the Oppressed.¹ (Although Freire is writing about Latin America, his observations are certainly applicable to many urban schools in the United States.)

This cogent discussion of the human condition directs some attention to a theory of oppression (model presented in Chart 1). Here the oppressor prescribes certain values and modes of behavior to the oppressed. Since the oppressor is omnipotent and the oppressed is powerless, the latter can only submit to the will of the former. The subject-actor can be a teacher who stands at the head of the class as the primary source of all learning. The object-actor, the student, must depend on the subject-actor for all responses and actions. This atmosphere is demoralizing to the object-actor and basically paternalistic.

However, the theory of oppression is complicated by a peculiarly American phenomenon. It is racism. Racism can be described as any activity by individuals, groups, institutions, or cultures that treats human beings unjustly because of color and rationalizes such treatment by attributing biological, psychological or social characteristics to the victim. (The victim may retaliate with feelings of hatred towards the system's prosperity and desire to sabotage it.)² In this context, racism served two functions. It completely subjugates the individual and demoralizes him to the point where he does not believe he is of any worth.

Racism also denies an individual equality and freedom without the master's consent.

²Ben Dixion, Consultant for Education Instruction in a presentation at the "Innovation Through Change" workshops at the Bloomfield (Conn.) Board of Education Interaction Conference, August 20, 1971.
Chart 1. Theory of Oppressive Action

Actors - Subjects
(dominant elites)

Object - the reality
to be preserved

Object - the oppressed
as part of reality

for

Objective - the
preservation of
oppression

From Friere, Pedagogy and
the Oppressed.
This is paternalism. Knowles and Prewitt describe this dehumanizing paternalism:

"Social scientists, social planners, and prosperous white people in general often exhibit a racist condescension toward the ghetto residents about whom they are so concerned. Rather than treating the poor as adults who know well what they lack and what they want, whites too often act as though black people were irresponsible children who cannot be trusted with power even in their own communities."^3

This situation, however, cleverly maintains the oppressor's authority over the oppressed. Power must remain with the oppressor, i.e., American institutions and those who control them since they reap the benefits of capitalism: the power of capitalism is manifested in production and materialism, which are the real source of power, at the expense of human needs. Historically, property has always taken precedent over people. Writing about the rise of world slavery, Eric Williams concludes:

"The various contending groups of dominant merchants, industrialists and politicians, while keenly aware of immediate interest, are for that reason generally blind to the long-range consequences of their actions, proposals, and policies."^4

Of course, there were other consequences of those actions. The most devastating, however, was the rise of African enslavement - the beginning of European oppression of the black man.

^3Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, Institutional Racism in America, Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1969, p. 120.

Merchants were not particular about who became slaves. Whites, Indians, and Africans were vulnerable to domination and enslavement. Williams observes that in the beginning, slavery had little or nothing to do with race. The subject-actor (oppressor) had gotten rather involved in the process of economic betterment. In short, the major consideration was economic. Racism did not enter into matters until Americans began to seek ways to continue the domination of slaves. The formula was very simplistic. The oppressor began to seek an economic advantage. Needing a cheap source of labor, he used Africans. In order to justify that domination, racism was employed and became ingrained in the very fiber of American life.

Now, as then, the major consideration is often economic. Sturdivant believes that consumer problems in the ghetto today are not based on racial discrimination alone, but on economics which are aggravated by poverty. But wealth, in America, is based on monied prosperity. Those who are denied opportunity because of race of station will remain poor. This hidden bias, ingrained in American life, is called institutional racism. Institutional racism is manifested in the interrelated efforts of American institutions to maintain poverty and oppression. The economic plight of the poor results from discriminating standards that work in conjunction with miseducation and denied training and skills to exclude the black and the poor (i.e., the oppressed) from sharing the prosperity of the society. This is what

Freire terms subjugation of the oppressed. 6

The subjugation of the oppressed through institutional racism is responsible for much of the oppression in American life. In our economic life, it is responsible for lack of equal opportunities in employment and advancement in the job force. It is estimated that 96% of the above $15,00 a year middle management jobs are held by white males, leaving 4% for blacks and women. 7 These statistics indicate the disparity between the oppressed and the oppressor, black and white, rich and poor. The small percentage of black participation in American management reflects tokenism. Those that consider black participation at this level of management as an achievement are misinformed. The white liberal American is noteworthy in this regard. He feels conditions are improving if thirty blacks from the ghetto go on to college, not cognizant that education has failed thousands. This is tokenism - giving people the idea that individually blacks are succeeding in occupational endeavors. These role models are upheld as living proof that the system works for the oppressed. 8 The oppressed, ignorant of the circumstances, believe this to be true, not realizing that most will not succeed. Paulo Freire calls this

6 Freire, op. cit., p. 135.


8 Lewis L. Knowles, op. cit., p. 119.
manipulation for conquest. The oppressed are defeated before they realize it, duped by dialogue or the absence of it. The oppressor dictates, the oppressed submits. The oppressor controls all, the oppressed control nothing. The oppressed depend on the oppressor for any expression, ideas, or thoughts. Originality has no place without approval; the oppressed are victims of self-betrayal and manipulation. Feelings of powerlessness result, which are demoralizing and depressing.

The oppressed begin to develop feelings of powerlessness rooted in fatalism. Viktor Frankl calls one aspect of that attitude "collective neurosis." Collective neurosis is a societal malady that inflicts countless millions who feel helpless in the face of "big brother." This neurosis is basically an insecurity of individuals who feel that they have lost control of their own destiny. This neurosis is also reflected in the attitude of white liberals who feel that blacks cannot liberate themselves without help from those liberals. This philosophy further perpetuates the castration of the oppressed and is reflected in the following quote from Michael Harrington:

"Clearly Negroes cannot achieve their emancipation on their own. They are, quite literally, a minority in the society and they do not possess the political power to win the vassal and comprehensive changes in public policy that are necessary if

9Freire, op. cit., p. 144.


11Michael Harrington, The Other America, Penguin, Maryland, 1962, p. 81.
there is to be real equality. Here once again, the Fate of the Lowest, the most dispossessed depends on what the better off, and particularly the labor movement, will do."

More appropriately, it is the elite that will control the oppressed - the management, not the laborers.

Conversely, many of the oppressed, confronted with powerlessness and insecurity, turn to the Black Church in America. Historically, the church developed as a hope factor for blacks who could escape the harshness of slavery and become a master, powerful through prayer. It offered escape from that social reality, a hope of a better life, and immortality through an Afterlife. Unfortunately, this proved to be another method of manipulation by the oppressor for the conquest of blacks.

Inasmuch as many blacks attended church frequently, it proved an ideal means of oppression. Blacks were taught that by good behavior (as defined by the master) and acceptance of their burdens, they would be rewarded in the afterlife. Many of the sermons to slave congregations were devoted to being free - to liberation and emancipation. But emancipation was a dream betrayed. The following excerpt from Plantation to Ghetto describes the disillusionment of blacks after Reconstruction and one hundred years later:

"All in all, the Northern whites - including former abolitionists - found it relatively easy to pay the price of sectional reconstruction. That price was the rejection of the idea of a racially equalitarian society - and even the desertion of the Negro's fundamental constitutional rights. The Negro's vision of a just and democratic society seemed doomed to frustration. A hundred years after Emancipation, Martin Luther King could still best express the extent of the Negro participation in American society by saying 'I have a dream...'."

Still, whites had the power and the right to say "no;" the black could only wait, then as now, for the white man's decision. American society is rooted in racism, i.e., a cultural self-interest and lack of commitment to change. That statement is fundamental to any understanding of the social reality, indeed the theory of oppression in an historical perspective. The oppressed must begin to understand the nature of that oppression that is castrating them before liberation can occur.\(^\text{13}\)

The antipathy of the oppressed is symptomatic of a decaying society. Once the nature of history in the context of the black man is construed, definitive action will result. Black people must understand the implications and relationship between present action and historical reality in order to liberate themselves. R.G. Collingwood agrees. He sees history as res gestae, in which significant human actions are studied in a historical perspective.\(^\text{14}\) Both the oppressed and the oppressor, for that matter, can gain an awareness, a consciousness of those events in history that have been dehumanizing. Freire sees this as an inescapable concern.\(^\text{15}\) It is a concern that we must face realistically.

Of course, there is an obvious danger in drawing too many conclusions from history about the present social reality. However, if history can explain the raison d'etre

\(^{13}\)Freire, op. cit., p. 128.


\(^{15}\)Freire, op. cit., p. 27.
of the individual and his social reality, it is worthwhile.

"Historians generally claim that they can give at least partial explanations of past events, but they do not ordinarily undertake to predict the future, even at the level of incompleteness and generality at which they 'explain' the past."16

Although history should not be used to predict behavior, it has excellent illustrative possibilities.

The oppressed must learn, rather, to view the total multidimensional events of time and not merely the linear relationships. An explanation of American history that fails to integrate African and Euro-American history on an equal plane is a case in point. Many American historians fail to recognize the spatial relationship between various historical events. Many American history texts, for this reason, are ethnocentric, treating the focal point of history within a European context, discrediting non-whites. Unless students, white or black, feel a part of history, it is of little value to them. When a new awareness of historical relationships can connect the events of the past to the present reality, that awareness will be significantly altered.

The Present Social Reality and Education

Social reality reflects the environmental influences upon the individual as he becomes aware of that environment. Education must begin to deal with any concerns of the learner that reflect his social reality. The social reality of the oppressed is not always reflected in school (except modest displays of prominent role models and neighborhood "friends," i.e., policemen

and firemen, etc.). Unless a perspective is developed that enhances the heritage of all people, education will remain irrelevant to most students.

The social reality of the urban student may be very different than the reality of the urban teacher. The ghetto defies knowing to those that are not a vital part of it. Fred Cook describes an oppressive ghetto reality:

"It is a city of 375,000; an estimated 61% Negro, 11% Puerto Rican. It is a city with an overall unemployment rate of 14% (25 to 30% among black and Puerto Rican.) Around 25% of those who are employed work only part-time, and there are virtually no summer jobs and few programs for the city's 80,000 school children who now roam the streets. Newark has the highest crime rate in the nation and 80,000 drug addicts. Blacks are afraid to allow their children to play in some parts of the city."17

This is the American dream? There is no American dream for blacks - only oppression, hardship, and frustration. Only when the student, as oppressed, recognize this reality will he be ready for liberation. In addition to accepting this reality, he must accept himself.

A truly enlightened individual must be able to achieve a full measure of independence through an acceptance of his personal worth. He must be allowed to evaluate his actions and restructure those actions to foster personal growth.

Yet, the school environment is so oppressive, that students are being dehumanized and destroyed. They have become the

objects of the most brutal kind of rejection — characterized by a denial of independent thought and action. The teacher as oppressor is the subject-actor who disseminates all knowledge and organizes all classroom activity. The student, conversely, is the object-actor who must receive all information and knowledge. This is called the "banking deposit system." This system does not recognize the object-actor as human. His concerns are unimportant. In short, the banking deposit system, where all information is deposited into the object-actor, is dehumanizing. Postman and Weingartner describe the banking deposit system:

"They are required to believe in authorities, or at least pretend to such belief, when they take tests. Mostly, they are required to remember. They are almost never required to make observations, formulate definitions, or perform any intellectual operations that go beyond repeating what someone else says is true." 19

The extent of irrelevant learning is also explained by John Holt such that it does not become part of the individual's way of life and is not important to him.

"Whether students learn anything is overshadowed by the fact that what they learn is not important to them or is a way of responding to hide failure." 20

20 John Holt, How Children Fail, p. 34.
Postman and Weingartner describe the failure as being rooted in an inability of the student to receive the real knowledge necessary for his survival in his social reality. He is hiding a failure that reflects his insecurity and frustration. He cannot compete because he often lacks the tools and perhaps does not really want to compete anyway.

This is perhaps why statistics on school failures have reached such alarming proportions. Over forty per cent of blacks in America do not finish high school (only 6% finish college). Public education is not reaching blacks and other oppressed minorities. What happens to these failures who must survive in an oppressive, racist social reality such as the one Fred Cook describes above? Here again, Postman and Weingartner offer a partial answer.

"These failures do not disappear. They remain in the community and they comprise the endless and growing population dedicated to 'getting even' with the society that reviled and rejected them in the school. The cost we pay for dealing with these drop-outs or 'push-outs' (many are literally asked to leave) far exceeds virtually whatever cost would be entailed in modifying the school environment so as to produce attitudes and skills in these young people that would help them to become participating and contributing members of the community rather than enemies."  

A method is needed that will meet the concerns of students, and these concerns are primarily to transform an oppressive social

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22 Postman and Weingartner, op. cit., p. 16.
reality and to liberate the self. A method is needed in education that will reverse the drop-out rate and avail students of an opportunity for relevant curricula.

In reality, if students are not reached, our entire educational system will be destroyed because everyone will have been expelled or will drop out. There is no meaningful communication between teachers and students. Teachers remain confined to the practices of the traditional system, honeycombed with racism and bigotry. Those students that remain in school are confronted with these attitudes. Many of them have "turned off" the teacher. Donna Schwab writes that:

"School has, for many students, always been a frustration and defeatingly negative experience. The law keeps most of them from physically dropping out, but hoards of them do their dropping out mentally."23

She points to the fact that these children are "a lot smarter than we think" and capable of great success if properly interested in the material.

If the material is selected for the learner, it will be of little use to him. We must concern ourselves with new ways of dealing with the relationship of the teacher to the student. At no other time in history has the demand for relevant curriculum been more important.

There is a problem of equal significance to the total educational picture. Many teachers are unaware of the racism that they perpetuate. Most teachers, once made aware, will begin to change. Richard Wisniewski recognizes the importance of teacher awareness:

"... if we are willing to examine ourselves, that is, our values, prejudices, motivations, and capabilities, we can go a long way toward reaching any students we teach."^24

Until teachers can learn to confront the social realities of the school, (i.e., institutional and individual racism) their role as oppressor, and the concerns of students, education will remain in jeopardy. Similarly, students must begin to understand the implications of history in order to understand the present social reality before liberation is possible.

**Sociodrama - Revolution in Education**

Many new methods are being employed in an attempt to improve interpersonal relations in the classroom. The focus is on assessment and evaluation of the individual within the group. Role playing is a major contributor in this respect. It is a method of acting out prescribed roles for the purpose of evaluation and behavior change. Science Research Associates (SRA) and Tufts Feline Center Intergroup Relations units are notable examples. Although the purpose of role playing is primarily illustrative, it is also used to examine attitudes.

Role playing attempts to offer a method of communication in which the participants can "try on" new kinds of behavior. Unfortunately, role playing does not allow individuals to be themselves. Shackled by a prescribed role, individuals cannot express their own actions and feelings. With SRA, many participants complain that too much information is given. They must spend valuable time memorizing the situations and circumstances of the characters. Frequently, the attitudes of the actor become confused with that of the character portrayed in the situation.

Furthermore, the situations are arbitrarily presented. The relationship between reality and the situation is not always discernible. It may not, in other words, represent the present social reality for the participants. The situation depicted may not concern the participants of the group. Therefore, the situations are not an intrinsic part of the learning experience. The teacher prescribes, while the learner responds.

In the role playing experience, participants learn how to act. They become more experienced with the techniques and begin to look for the "teacher-pleasing responses." This often perpetuates the banking deposit system.

Sociodrama, a similar interpersonal method of communication, differs from role playing in intensity and technique. In role playing, the participants act out specific characters while sociodrama allows the learner to portray a character that closely reflects his attitudes but is more general in context. This difference is not often recognized by educators.
Many use the terms "role playing" and "sociodrama" synonymously. In fact, sociodrama and role playing use similar procedures and both are used for illustrative purposes. Basically, sociodrama requires more honesty than role playing (in which participants hide behind meaningless characters).

Because of the intensity of sociodrama, it can be used in Freire's model of "Theory for Revolutionary Action" (See Chart 2) to overcome oppression. Sociodrama can be used as a mediating object between the actor-subject and the actor-object, stimulating interaction to transform reality (see Chart 3). As a mediating object, sociodrama can foster communication and experimentation between both groups.

Sociodrama has been used in public education primarily for problem-solving in the cognitive domain. Feelings were not generally discussed. However, sociodrama was largely unsuccessful because of the lack of proper "warm-up" activities to "liberate the teacher from the role of the oppressor and the student from the role of the oppressed." Dialogue, spontaneity testing, and methods borrowed from psychodrama warm-ups prove useful.

Sociodrama was used in history courses as an illustrative device to gain "living proof" that events actually occurred in the past. Here again, the teacher provides the stage and the script. Sociodrama should reflect real concerns and also knowledge of history. Sociodrama has not been used extensively with blacks. There should be some experimentation in that ...
Chart 2. Theory of Revolutionary Action

Intersubjectivity

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<tr>
<th>Subjects - actors (revolutionary leaders)</th>
<th>Actors - subjects (the oppressed)</th>
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<td>Object which mediates</td>
<td>Reality to be transformed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object which mediates</td>
<td>Object which mediates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanization as a permanent process</td>
<td>Objective</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From Friere, Pedagogy and the Oppressed.
Chart 3. Revolutionary Sociodrama

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Subjects - actors</th>
<th>Actors - subjects</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object which mediates</th>
<th>Sociodrama</th>
<th>Object which mediates</th>
</tr>
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</table>

for

Humanization as a permanent process
regard so that children can see the relationship between the present social reality and its historical implications. The following questions will be discussed throughout the dissertation.

Question one. Can non-white (oppressed) students gain insight into problems, both academic and personal, through sociodrama? These problems are those considered intrinsically important to the child as indicated by various sociodramatic measures.

Question two. Can attitude change regarding race be observed through sociodramatic experiences?²⁵

Question three. Can teachers gain valuable teaching experience using sociodramatic techniques?²⁶

Question four. Can sociodrama be used in all areas of education including history, counseling, and teacher training to improve instruction?

Question five. Can the dimensions of the warm-up be expanded to include other aspects of sociometric measurement?

Question six. Can sociodrama be used as a vehicle (instrument) to liberate students and teachers from the role of the oppressed and the oppressor?

²⁵Pilot study begun at Northeast (Vermont) Education Action Center by writer and a similar study at the Bloomfield (Conn.) Interaction Group demonstrates some change.

²⁶Evidence gained at the South Arsenal Neighborhood Development Corporation Everywhere School (Hartford, Conn.) and the SPHERE Follow-Up T-T Program (Simsbury, Conn.) demonstrate this point.
Definition of Terms

The importance of social reality cannot be overlooked. A definitive statement is offered in Making Urban Schools Work.27 The authors stress the importance of the environment of the learner in the learner's understanding of social reality. In part, schools will work if they recognize the environment and cultural background of the learner and his concerns, that lead to self-actualization.

The idea is that the subject for the curriculum is, in part, the learner and whatever it is that is important to him. Terry Borton defines concerns as deep-rooted problems of an immediate nature.28 Concerns are not always readily assessable to the teacher. Sometimes concerns are hidden within present interest.29 Many concerns reflect negative self-concept or self-image.

Self-image, self-concept - the way the learner perceives himself - is important for any liberation from an oppressive condition. The learner must be allowed to find himself creatively, although this does not imply that only extremely talented people can succeed. There is another kind of creativity that leads to fulfillment - what Tillich calls "self-actualization."

"Creative, in this context, has a sense not of original creativity as performed by the

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27 Mario Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, Making Urban Schools Work.


genius but of living spontaneously, in action and reaction, with the context of one's cultural life.  

Although Tillich is speaking in a spiritual context, it does not diminish the educational implications. Interaction of individuals in a classroom that allows students to contribute intrinsically "from within" will improve the individual worth. Once the traditional relationship is destroyed - of the teacher as subject-actor and the student as an object-actor - self-image will improve. Otherwise, the oppression will continue. This is Freire's theory of oppressive action.  

The Kerner Commission Report aptly describes the oppressive state of American racism:

"What white Americans have never fully understood - but what the Negro can never forget - is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."  

It is hoped that once teachers and students become aware of the nature of oppression and their relationship to it, appropriate new relationships can be established. Sociodrama helps establish these new relationships, since the subject matter is no longer irrelevant material but is, instead, the learner himself.  

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30 Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Yale, New Haven, 1952, p. 46.
32 Tom Wicker, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Bantam, 1968, p. VII.
The learner must also be made aware of his relationship to others and the historical implications of that relationship. It is important for him to know that the oppression he experiences is the result of the same racism (although more violent in the past) that has destroyed generations of blacks in America. Richard Kean puts it rather succinctly:

"Rather, when students do discover a sense of identity, it is through an acute sense of individual and collective significance in a very particular historical context."\(^{33}\)

He is implying that radicalism in education is dependent on the actions of the individual acting independently in order to reinforce self-image in the context of the global arena.

In a word, our society is changing faster than our ability to understand it. Ignorance is a source of oppression. In order to know society at each moment, we must change with that society. "To learn is to change. Education is a process that changes the learner."\(^{34}\) Through sociodrama, we can safely interact and change with others in a learning environment that is meaningful and creative.


CHAPTER II

SOCIODRAMA IN EDUCATION

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Failure of Traditional Methods to Confront Social Reality

A fundamental problem with the literature on sociodrama is that it has done precisely what was intended. For the school population and the environment of the writers, sociodrama had succeeded; but for scores of oppressed inner-city students, sociodrama had done little. It had proven to be irrelevant for many of the oppressed and did not meet real concerns. Part of the problem, however, was the result of confusion, and not apathy, on the part of educators.

Many educators fail to grasp the distinction between role-playing, sociodrama, and psychodrama. This could definitely contribute to misuse. Perhaps the most definitive statement on the distinctions is made by James A. Bobula.\(^{35}\) Briefly Bobula defines psychodrama as a dramatic form which allows the individual to retain his identity. In other words, he plays himself. Psychodrama attempts to give an individual insight into a problem that is very real to him by reliving that problem.

\[^{35}\text{James A. Bobula, "The Theater of Spontaneous Man," Group Psychotherapy, 22, 1969, p. 47.}\]
"The psychodrama is a technique in which the patient spontaneously acts out his inner conflicts on a stage with the aid of "auxiliary egos" (trained persons who stand by ready to assist him), a director, and at times a participating audience."36

Many authors point out the intense nature of psychodrama and recommend extreme professional discretion.

Bobula sees sociodrama as problem-solving of a generalized nature personified in a specific role. For example, Robert would dramatize all black militants. Terry would be all student nurses at Pandolf College.

"It is not the private problem of one or another individual in the group as in psychodrama, but a problem in which all individuals sharing in a common social conflict, present or not present, are involved."37

The problem is symptomatic of American society and not specific individuals generally characterized in role-playing. Arthur Katona corroborates Bobula's definitions. But Katona states that sociodrama, in addition to dealing with group problems, stages rehearsed problem plays and he thus believes that sociodrama is legitimate theater.

In role-playing, the person takes the role of another person (role-taking).39 The problem is constructed and may or


may not resemble aspects of his personal life. The major criticism of role-playing is that it allows people to play roles without becoming involved. "Since the problem is constructed, role-playing utilizes a make-believe dimension enabling the individual to try out new types of behavior with impunity." Although students need not be unduly threatened by dramatic situations, they should be challenged to the point where behavior is relevant (internalized through action insight).

Psychodrama, then, is far too esoteric a procedure for the large classroom of the inner-city schools. In addition, it must be used expeditiously by trained personnel. Role-playing, conversely, is used extensively in the public schools for illustrative purposes, i.e., demonstrating a situation or opinion. Little attempt has been made to deal with oppression (racism in education). Therefore, sociodrama is the only method that is practicable since it was designed to study the relationship of the individual to the group. Sociodrama has been used by educators to depict that relationship.

Robert Haas provides a roadmap to successful sociodrama. He lists the importance of those techniques that allow

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40 Bobula, op. cit.


42 John S. Gibson, The Intergroup Relations Curriculum, Tufts University, 1969.

flexibility in the sociodramatic presentation. Symbolic distance (reaching specific roles through less significant roles), monologue (an informal presentation similar to soliloquy), dialogue, and other techniques are presented as devices in sociodrama but are seen, in some cases, far more comfortably as tools of psychodrama. Haas, however, deals more with theory than with practical application. However, J.L. Moreno coordinates role theory to the practicality of social reality. Here again, no attempt was made to deal with the fundamental concerns and social reality of the oppressed.

Several educators recognize the importance of these concerns. Fannie R. Shaftel expresses that importance and the necessity to relate through role-playing to those concerns:

"... we must concern ourselves more than ever before with the life situations of children which are important to them." 45

However, no really impressive effort was made to reach the concerns of blacks through sociodrama. But some effort was made to reach problem students. Walter Greenleaf 46 proposed many alternative methods for students having difficulties. Some of these methods were rather ambiguous and impractical for the inexperienced counselor or teacher.

Other educators sought to adjust behavior through sociodrama. It was thought that as a training device,


sociodrama could be used to foster democratic attitudes.

Bert Hansen\(^ {47} \) discusses the importance of community in sociodrama and various techniques to reach that community. Of tantamount importance to Hansen in discussion the conditions of sociodrama is the fact that the problem presented is not solved, but it is merely the assignment of sociodrama to stimulate discussion leading to an individual re-evaluation. His community sociodrama is based on the premise that group problems of a societal nature are best solved by the participants in their own habitat. Studies by Deutschlerger\(^ {48} \) and Florence Moreno\(^ {49} \) attempted community involvement with other devices.

Lois Shellhammer\(^ {50} \) believes that sociodrama is useful for personal problem-solving, but it is more appropriately used for group problem-solving. Although the problem presented may be highly personal to some, sociodrama is intended mainly to reflect the general problem of the group. Personal problems are best dealt with by psychodrama. To deal with personal problems in a sociodramatic situation could prove more threatening to the individual.


Some effort has been made to handle concerns through the social reality of children, but it has missed the mark. Thousands of black children are still problem-ridden and discouraged. But these methods, although relatively successful with white children, have failed overall because the fundamental social reality of blacks has been ignored. Educators have failed to properly diagnose the problem.

Several methods are used to diagnose concerns in order to guide a group into the most appropriate and stimulating sociodrama. Gerald Lawlor uses a role behavior questionnaire to stimulate thinking about actions and behavior. He leaves it to the discretion of the researcher for specific utilization and modification, but very simply, Lawlor wants participants to take a personal inventory of their behavior. It is an excellent means to stimulate thinking and conversation but it must be used in conjunction with other methods.

It is often helpful to diagnose the participant’s ability to handle sociodrama. Two methods seem to be most useful. Role-testing allows some assessment of the participants’ behavior and what they project as their behavior. Thus more honesty results. Spontaneity testing, another testing method, allows peer evaluation of performances.

In addition to misreading real concerns, the use of sociodrama has lacked consistency. Although numerous

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sociodramas are offered by scores of authors for classroom use, (most notable are Walter Greenleaf\textsuperscript{53} and Fannie Shaftel\textsuperscript{54}) little attempt is made to train teachers to properly diagnose concerns, or conduct a sociodrama. Within the context of a humanistic curriculum model (chart 4), sociodrama can survive. The learner has been defined in this thesis as any oppressed student frustrated by a system that denies equal opportunity. Meeting concerns is the raison d'etre of sociodrama. The fundamental concern of the oppressed is not merely to assimilate (if that is a concern at all) but how to 'get his foot off my neck,' as one student so aptly expressed it. The new age of sociodrama should meet that concern.

Some diagnostic measures were given above. The "gripe session," however, is still the most useful measure. The gripe session is readily explained by Helen Jennings.\textsuperscript{55} She describes the gripe session as a discussion that determines possible subjects of sociodrama. However, this method does not always afford the maximum candor among students. Ackerknecht\textsuperscript{56} uses note cards as a possible solution to that problem.

Other warm-up techniques are used as diagnostic devices and to acclimate the audience to the sociodrama. Milling,

\textsuperscript{53} Greenleaf, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{54} Shaftel, op. cit.


Chart 4. Humanistic Curriculum Model

## Content Vehicles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners Concerns</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Organizing Ideas</th>
<th>Content Vehicle</th>
<th>Learning Skills</th>
<th>Teaching Procedures</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Learners Reality**

From Mario Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, ed, Humanistic Education.
one-word fantasy band, sociometric tag, living newspaper, and the warm-up circle are important techniques to help students prepare for sociodrama.  

Eya Rudhyar uses a similar method with a band-oriented warm-up. Real instruments are used in an attempt to get students to express concerns. This kind of warm-up, like sociodrama, tends to free the teacher from the traditional role of authority figure and allows a new kind of relationship among students and teachers. Generalizations can be formed from those situations to facilitate sociodrama.

The concept of "organizing ideas" is the core of sociodrama and of humanistic curriculum. These ideas are formed through generalizations which help organize the subject of sociodrama. Most of the feedback from the group about concerns must be reorganized into generalizations to coordinate activities. Since generalization is the fundamental prerequisite for sociodrama, "organizing ideas" becomes important to the learning process. It is important to connect concerns of students and also find connections between those concerns and students' social reality.


CHAPTER III

USING SOCIODRAMA IN THE FIELD

Case 1. Sociodrama and Spontaneity Testing in a Race Relations Program For Metropolitan City Teachers

Teachers in our public schools are often unwilling to discuss feelings of race prejudice. When teachers do discuss race, they often reveal misunderstanding of the race problem. The question is what can be done about teachers' inability to understand students and themselves in the school environment. Charles Wilson describes the magnitude of the problem:

"At this point in time the American people are dismayed when this opulent society of theirs is referred to as 'racist.' For these people have never been taught to examine their institutions or to determine what the institutions in fact do to them. Without a point of view, these same American people are ill-equipped to either recognize or deal with their problems. Leadership that combines commitment, forcefulness, and broad insight is largely absent. Thus, all problems are magnified, enemies are multiplied, and a great deal of energy is misdirected into either flight from urban centers or quixotic fights against rights, race and roadways." 59

Wilson's statement reflects the reality of teachers and educators when dealing with blacks and other minorities. If teachers could examine their own opinions, fear and racism might be avoided.

The objectives of Case 1 are threefold: (1) to illustrate to some extent the problems of individuals and institutions often associated with racial animosity; (2) to illustrate the importance of personal inventory as a 'lead in' to racial discussion; (3) to illustrate the importance of sociodrama in race.

relations programs. The participants were 15 black and white teachers in a suburban human relations workshop.

Procedure

The procedure used was the standard format for sociodrama. Generally, in each sociodrama, only the warm-up varied.

Step 1: Warm-Up - Warm-up for sociodrama is any sociometric test, including discussion, that attempts to familiarize participants with sociodramatic techniques, provides some criteria for diagnosis of concerns and problems, and enables students to relax before and during sociodrama. Role inventory was used here as a warm-up instrument. The role inventory is a measure that allows self-examination of role behavior. The participants, using a rating scale, evaluate role behavior, then discuss that evaluation. Chart 5 describes the role inventory. In Column I of the inventory, participants were asked to check the roles they frequently played. The categories were the Family, Vocation, Groups, Person-to-Person, and the World.

Participants were requested to choose the appropriate items in each category and check them under Column I. The instructions at the top of the inventory sheet were the basis for selecting each item. For Column I, the instructions were to think of the roles played by the participant in his daily activities and to check the roles frequently played. For example, a female teacher might check the following items: wife, mother, daughter, and sister in the Family category; follower and observer in the Group category; student, employee and co-worker under the Vocational category; while friend and neighbor were checked in the Person-to-Person category and intellectual in the World category.

60Gerald Lawlor, "Two Aids to the Analysis of Role Behavior," Sociometry, 2, 1948.

61A similar procedure was followed at the Northeast (Vermont) Education Action Center Human Relations program conducted by Ron Simmons and Robert Ho, Associate Director of that program, March 17-21, 1970 and June 21-25, 1970.
The fifteen participants were instructed to add items where desired in each category. Many items were added. Some of these additions were more revealing, e.g., whore, fool, sucker, and red-neck. However, most participants added items that were similar to existing items.

Next, participants were asked to indicate how well each role was played in Column II. A one to five rating scale was used in which one equals "very well," two equals "fairly well," three equals "indifferently," four equals "poorly" and five equals "very poorly." Participants were to rate themselves on the basis of the success of the role. Of course, only the items that were selected in Column I should be rated in Column II.

Column III of the role inventory is an attempt to gain information about the preference of individuals for those roles indicated in Columns I and II. A rating scale from one to five was used where one is "like the role very much," two is "like the role fairly well," three is "indifferent," four is "dislike the role," and five is "hate the role." Participants were urged to be especially honest in Column III.

In Column IV of the role inventory, members were instructed to indicate how well they would like each role if they could play the roles without restrictions. Participants were also instructed to use the same scale that was used in Column III.

Column V asks participants to indicate the roles that they would play given free choice to play any role. Participants were also asked to rate the roles according to the criteria and the scale used in Column II. Items not already listed were sought in this section of the inventory.

The final category is an addition by the author in an attempt to reveal uncomfortable roles and situations. The instructions were as follows: "List situations dealing with minority or ethnic group members that have been annoying or embarrassing. Describe them." Each inventory was collected by

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the trainer and briefly read to get an idea of the items indicated. Then the trainer initiated a discussion based on the inventory. Several questions were important to the overall functioning of the discussion. "What roles did each of you choose and why? Why did you rate the roles as you did? Why did you choose those embarrassing situations? Describe them in detail." The discussion was designed to find common situations for sociodrama. When more than half the group indicated in the discussion that a situation was especially unsolvable, it became the subject of sociodrama.

**Step 2: Sociodrama** - During the discussion, several common problems were indicated by the group. Perhaps the most common problem was in the Person-to-Person category. Many teachers indicated an inability to understand or communicate with an increased number of black students in classrooms. A common problem became identifiable for sociodrama. The following paragraph was used as a lead-in to prepare the participants for the sociodrama:

A black fifth-grade boy reading on a first-grade level despised his teacher. He would not do any work and would not cooperate. Instead, he would disrupt the class. This, of course, annoyed the teacher who began to show similar hostility toward the children.

Participants were allowed to volunteer to play the roles in the sociodrama. The roles of the fifth-grade boy, the teacher, and perhaps other students can be identified for the sociodrama. Several groups of three to five members were allowed to discuss the execution of the sociodrama before the actual performance. Participants were instructed not to practice the actual performance and the dialogue because the sociodrama should be spontaneous. Only the format should be discussed so that all the members understand what is to be done in the actual sociodrama. The actual sociodrama might begin as follows:

Teacher: What are you doing? (tersely)
Student: Nothin'. I don't have nothin' to do.
Teacher: I have given you plenty of work.
Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama - After the sociodrama was performed, a discussion occurred to examine the realism of the performances. The discussion was based on the spontaneity test, a method used here that allows participants to rate performances using a one-to-five rating scale similar to that used in the warm-up exercise in Chart 5. Spontaneity testing uses the realism of the performances and the ability of the participants to immerse into the roles as criteria for rating. Chart 6 shows a typical form used by members of the group for evaluation of the sociodrama.

Since most sociodramas try to limit participants to a manageable number, only five slots appear under the heading "Persons role playing." The rater places his name at the top of the form. (If the rater is also performing, his name would appear twice.) Using the scale at the top of the page, the raters were asked to judge the sociodrama in terms of the ability of the performer to immerse into roles, i.e., to dramatize the role with honesty and sincerity. Ratings were based also on the realism or authenticity of the performances according to the role description during the warm-up (see Chart 7 for sociodrama procedure).

A spontaneity testing grid was constructed by the trainer, as shown in Chart 8. Notice the vertical total under the heading "Pete." This total indicates how well Pete performed according to his peers (21). Pete performed poorly, receiving many fours and fives. Diane, conversely, had a vertical total of seven which might indicate an ability to dramatize problems in sociodrama. The horizontal total across from Pete is much lower than his peer ratings. Here Pete is rating others. The

ratings should be discussed openly so that the reasons for the rating can be compared. Pete may want to perform another sociodrama until his peer ratings are lower.

Summary

Sociodrama and spontaneity testing were used in Case 1 to illustrate several points. First, Case 1 illustrates the potentiality of sociodrama to be used in a human relations program to dramatize common concerns for possible solution. Sociodrama is important in a human relations program in terms of problem-solving. Participants can 'experiment' with various alternative solutions to problems.

Teachers may begin to realize that much of the problem of student-teacher relations rests with the teacher. Teachers need to realize that they are adults who are accountable for the education of each student in the classroom. Although failures are inevitable, better human relations and understanding can help improve the achievement and success of children in the classroom.

Case 2. Sociodrama and Spontaneity Testing in Black History to Improve Relations Among Teachers and Students in an Urban School

Part of the problem of race relations is that many people fail to understand that blacks have a definite cultural heritage in America and that that heritage is very much a part of American history and of the present American society and culture. Black students need a positive self-image. Instead, much of the treatment of Black American History presents a negative image or no image at all. Many educators fail to understand the need for a program of study that does not contain such negativism, hate and neglect.

Case 2 will illustrate that sociodrama can be used to encourage the positive aspects of cultural heritage. Case 2 is based on the fact that black Americans are a mixture of African and American cultures.
Albert Murray calls these black Americans Omni-Americans:

"The Omni-American is based in large measure on the assumption that since the negative aspects of black experience are constantly being over-publicized (and so little purpose serve to obscure the positive), justice to U.S. Negroes, not only as American citizens but also as the fascinating human beings that they so obviously are, is best served by suggesting some of the affirmative implications of their history and culture. After all, someone must at least begin to try to do justice to what U.S. Negroes like about being black and to what they like about being Americans."

Social scientists are constantly writing about the injustices done to blacks and the poverty and denigration of the black American experience.

Case 2 also attempts to illustrate that socially acceptable behavior can be learned from black history. Students can visualize a new perspective in dealing with various ethnic groups in a particular historical setting.

Participants

Twenty-eight fifth-grade black, Puerto Rican, and white students participated in Case 2, which was conducted over a two-day period in an urban self-contained classroom.

Procedure

Step 1: Warm-Up - Role testing, a method of demonstration of participants' ability to play a role, was used as a warm-up device to get at concerns about history, race, and culture. For example, students might be instructed to dramatize Washington chopping down the cherry tree or Estevanico's founding of the Seven Cities of Gold. Role-testing attempts to introduce students to a dramatization of historical events and give the teacher some idea of the students' ability to play roles and their knowledge of history.

64 Albert Murray, The Omni-Americans, Outerbridge, 1970. 65

Next, students were allowed to discuss the role lesson. The teacher asked students a variety of questions to stimulate discussion. For example, "Do you like history? What is wrong with history? How can we improve our history textbook?" Students might say that history is boring or that the book is hard to read. The students were asked to write down their concerns about history in the classroom on three-by-five index cards. Students were also instructed to record at least three concerns, statements or names to describe a certain ethnic or racial group. For example, for blacks, some students wrote "darkie" and "spook" and for Italians, "garlic mouth" and "Mafia." Other students wrote that they were very concerned about those names and the treatment of all groups in textbooks.

**Step 2: Sociodrama** — Since most members found the treatment of minorities in textbooks to be a concern, this treatment became the subject of the sociodrama. The following paragraph represents a description of the situation used as a lead-in for the dramatization:

A group of Negroes from Cincinnati settle in Wilberforce, near London, Ontario, Canada, in 1830 as a haven for fugitive slaves. There were 32 families, with churches, a sawmill, schools, and a gristmill. There was also a board of governors and a staff of officers. Suppose you were a part of that community. Dramatize what you would do.

Several groups were formed and given ample time to organize for the sociodrama. Participants were allowed to discuss the format and identify the characters. One member of the group wanted to play a person like Austin Steward, the president of the Board of Managers. Other performers chose tax collectors, artisans, and teachers.

One sociodrama on the Wilberforce community began:

(A tall black stately man approaches the front of the hall filled with people. He was presented as the president of the Board of Managers of the community.)

President: I realize that most of you are tired. We have worked long and hard, braved the winter months
in Canada, and now there is little money. Please bear with us.

Artisan: I am tired of being here. I am going to take my family back to America.

Teacher: Don't be fools. You are fugitives from justice. Slaves. You would be captured immediately.

Artisan: You are right. But there are other settlements further east that are more prosperous.

President: We will miss anyone that will leave, but we cannot hold you any longer.

Step 2: Discussion of Sociodrama - The above description of the Wilberforce sociodrama is only a small representation of the actual sociodrama. The Wilberforce sociodrama is similar to the historical method of sociodrama used by Sarah Fabio.66

Students are allowed to come together after the sociodrama to discuss the dramatization. The performers had used spontaneity testing with historical accuracy (realness of performances) as the criteria. The raters used a one-to-five scale (Chart 6) for the rating. The discussion centered around the reasons for the ratings.

Most raters felt that the sociodramas were historically accurate and reflected a fair treatment of the Negro people. The Negroes were portrayed as articulate and industrious workers experiencing heartship, not as lazy and inarticulate 'no-accounts.' If ratings were poor because they did not reflect historical accuracy, the performances were dramatized again until the ratings improved.

Summary

Sociodrama can be used successfully to reflect the positive aspects of cultural groups. Students can illustrate through sociodrama positive aspects of those cultural groups.

Using role playing and history lecture as warm-up techniques, students can observe the importance of ‘positive group concept.’

As in Sarah Fabio’s Saga of the Black Man, Case 3 illustrates the importance of sociodrama to foster awareness of the cultural importance of groups. Awareness of the black experience is important as well as achievement in the face of adversity. Sociodrama can be used to illustrate that although life was hard and at times cruel, for black Americans, they endured by hard work, ingenuity, and strength of character.

Case 3. Improving Black Students’ Ability to Deal with Difficult Problems Through Sociodrama

Black students in predominantly white schools often experience alienation and misunderstanding in the school community. Many comments made by whites, both administrators and students alike, can often affront and embarrass black students. Some of these situations may not seem especially serious to whites, but they may be most serious to blacks.

Whites often forget that blacks must adjust to new situations and perhaps a different lifestyle. Mundane and commonplace occurrences may be complicated by race. One black private school student commented that in addition to the pressures of school, black students have to learn an entirely new language— a whole new way of acting with others. There are many mistakes and many embarrassing situations.

Case 3 attempts to help black teenage girls at a private boarding school (1) to deal with many of the peculiarities that occur to avoid misunderstanding; (2) to familiarize black students with appropriate and socially acceptable behavior at the school; and (3) to teach black students how to coexist with whites. A study similar to Case 3 was conducted by Lucy Ackerknecht dealing with school-age students who experienced difficulty with embarrassing situations. Case 3 differs from the Ackerknecht study. First, Case 3 uses sociodrama, not

Lucy Ackerknecht, op. cit., pp. 39-42.
role playing, because sociodrama allows greater freedom of expression. Second, many of the problems in Case 3 are far more endemic to the participants than the Ackerman study.

Participants

The participants in Case 3 were 14 black girls who had recently enrolled in a private school. All of the girls were from inner cities around the U.S.A. - without exception from poverty environments. (A sharp contrast from the upper-middle class white population of the school.)

Procedure

Step 1: Warm-Up - The students were given a brief lecture familiarizing them with sociodrama.68 Then students were given 3x5 index cards and instructed to list several racial situations at the school that had been especially embarrassing to them. The cards were collected and some were read to the group. One hundred and eight statements were written on the cards. Some of the statements were discussed by the group at great length. These statements became common ground for sociodrama.

Step 2: Sociodrama - A common problem, for example, was as follows:

One white teacher tells me that my poetry is no good and I know it's just because it concerns black people. She tells me that I must change all the words that deal with black people.

The problem was that students wanted to know how to cope with the problem described above. Volunteers agreed to dramatize the situation. Part of the sociodrama appears below.

Teacher: What is this, Deborah?
Mary: This is my paper. Why?
Teacher: (reading the short poem) This is not a good poem.
Mary: Why not? I am using the right style.

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Teacher: You use a lot of bad words in here.
Mary: This is the language of the street.
Teacher: You are not in the street now. Rewrite the poem.
Mary: The hell with it!

Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama - Spontaneity testing was used by the group to rate the performances according to (1) realness of the situation dramatized and (2) the ability of each performer to immerse into the particular role being played. Below is a grid representing the ratings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rater</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Connie</th>
<th>Cheryl</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie</td>
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</table>

The one-to-five rating scale on Chart 6 was used by the raters. In the grid above, for example, Mary was rated 4 by two of the raters (vertical reading under Mary), indicating a poor performance. The raters felt that Mary could have handled the situation differently. Mary agreed, rating herself 5 (horizontal reading). The raters felt that Mary was too abrupt and should have gotten all of the criticism before 'stomping off.' The sociodramas were dramatized until the ratings improved.

Summary

Sociodrama and spontaneity testing offer many opportunities to counsel students who have adjustment problems in school. Many alternatives were dramatized until students began to realize the importance of handling difficult situations with maturity and honesty.
Chart 5

FORM I - I. Think of the roles played and check the roles frequently played by you. II. Indicate how well each role is played.
1- very well  2- fairly well  3- indifferently
4- poorly     5- very badly
III. Indicate how much you like to play each role.
1- like it very much  2- like it fairly well
3- indifferent    4- dislike  5- hate
IV. Indicate how much you would like role if you could play it the way you wanted to (use same scale as III).
V. If you could choose, could you play any role. List them.

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<tr>
<td>Good Dresser</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

List roles you would like to play and how well you think you could play them.

List situations that have been annoying or embarrassing dealing with minority or ethnic group members. Describe them.

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Chart 6

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<th>Person roleplaying</th>
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1- very well
2- fairly well
3- indifferently
4- poorly
5- very poor
Chart 7

Procedure For Sociodrama

Step 1: Warm-Up

(1) discussion of group concerns
   (a) ask audience to write down concerns
   (b) ask question about these concerns to stimulate discussion

(2) use the most common concern of the group for sociodrama
   (a) start with a description of the setting for sociodrama, identifying the characters
   (b) allow members of audience to volunteer to dramatize the common problem

Step 2: Sociodrama

(1) allow participants to come together to decide what the characters should be doing and what the common problem will be within the sociodrama

(2) perform the sociodrama spontaneously without stopping to describe or explain the action. When the participants have finished, use spontaneity testing to rate the performers.

(3) use a one-to-five rating scale and rate the performers according to the ability of each character to emerse into the roles and the realness of the performances. Participants should rate each other, too.

Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama

(1) ratings should be discussed by the participants and the audience alike, stating the reason for each rating and the ability of the group to adequately solve the problem presented in the warm-up.
Chart 7 (Cont.)

(2) if the problem was not solved to the liking of the group, the sociodrama may be dramatized again, using the same performers or new performers. Spontaneity testing should be used each time.

(3) A thorough discussion of alternative approaches and solutions to the problem should follow each replay of the sociodrama.
Chart 8

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<th>Fred</th>
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</table>
Students found sociodrama to be a fun way to experience difficult situations. All of the students were amazed at the many alternatives open to them. Better student-teacher relations resulted over a period of time.

Students learned the importance of coexisting with cultural environments potentially hostile and counterproductive to the individual. Other workshops might be planned with white teachers and students for a similar purpose. The importance of learning how to act with others for one's survival is most important and should be emphasized in sociodramas of this type.
Case 4. Black Art as a Warm-Up Device With Sociodrama

Certainly countless exercises have been produced in recent years to allow participants to lead into the sociodrama. Sociometric devices and inventories (Ackernecht; Simmons) have proven to be useful warm-up devices with educational groups. Recently, however, various ethnic and racial groups are receiving a rude awakening as to their position in the American "societal pecking order." Many people are beginning to realize that they must compete in school and in industry with a new brand of black man, Indian, Mexican, etc. In short, oppressed groups need a particular social reinforcement. Case 4 attempts to meet several objectives in sociodrama for black students: (1) They need to know that there are black Americans capable of profound creation. (2) They need to experience those creations, i.e., remember them, enjoy them, and interact with them. (3) Also, black children need to allow their own creative ability to interact with significant black art to reinforce positive self-concept.

69 Gerald Lewon, op. cit.
70 Lucy Ackernecht, op. cit.
71 Ron Simmons, op. cit.
72 Dr. Eli Ginsberg of Columbia University in a Nov. 30, 1971 CBS radio interview, believes that 35% (2½ million) blacks between the ages of 16 and 24 are unemployed. He believes that most are qualified for jobs but are discriminated against in favor of less or equally qualified whites.
Sociodrama and black art will be used here just as Eya Rudhyar used the fantasy band to warm up her participant.

Participants

Fifteen black children from an inner city school participated in the awareness workshop. The children, aged ten to twelve, had had virtually no exposure to black American or African art. There were no special intelligence or emotional problems. Most children had an average I.Q.

Procedure

A series of pictures on black art was presented to the group. The participants were asked to think about what each picture meant to them and what was happening in the picture. For example, "If this picture were alive, what would it say, how would it act? If you were in the picture, tell what you would be doing. Show what you would be doing."

Picture one - A mask worn at puberty ceremonies in Makonde near the Mozambique-Tanzania border was shown. The mask is dark reddish-brown in color with long black hair on the head and under the chin. Four white bead-like spirals appear on the center of the forehead, above the nose, two on the cheek, and one below the chin. The mask is highlighted by ears perpendicular to the face, beady eyes, and an oval mouth.

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74 Margaret Trowell and Hans Neurmann, African and Oceanic Art, (New York: Abrams) p. 27.
There were varied responses to the questions. To the question, "What is happening in the picture?" children responded: 1) "The man is whistling," 2) "The man is frightened," 3) "The man is sick. If I were in the picture, I would be whistling, too." "If I were in the picture, I would be asking him why he is sick," or "I would run away from him."

Picture two - This is a Poro secret society mask from Liberia. An elongated face characterizes the mask with protruding features, especially the eyes. "The man just saw something good. If I were in the picture, I would ask him what he has seen. I would also look for the same thing that he sees."

Picture three - A mask, Rapende, from the Congo. Fiber wigs and eyes that seem to be closed characterize this picture. "The lady is sleeping" or "The lady is thinking" are typical responses to the question: What is happening in the picture? "If I were in the picture, I would try to find out what she is thinking about."

Picture four - Fred Flemister, "The Mourners," is the author and title of this picture. It depicts a scene of black people who appear to be mourning someone apparently hung from a tree.

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76 Trowell and Nevermann, op. cit., p. 25.
"The people are dancing" or "They are crying" are typical responses to the question: What are the people doing? "If I were in the picture, I would be crying or dancing, too."

**Picture five - Allan Crite, "Tyre Jumping,"** depicts a typical city street scene with children playing and people walking hurriedly about the shops. 78 "The people are black and are all celebrating winning the revolution." "If I were in the picture, I would be celebrating, too."

**Discussion**

Twenty-four pictures were selected in this study for diversity and variation. Most of the pictures concerned unique and varied subjects from religious life in parts of seventeenth century Africa to American slavery and modern black American scenes. Many other pictures were available for use but were kept in reserve because they duplicated subject matter of pictures already selected. Certainly even more and varied responses could have come from those pictures. Those pictures not used, the writer believes, would not have been as effective in producing response in the children.

Black art as a warm-up technique for sociodrama can be very effective in helping students into a discussion on black art or on situations particularly interesting to them. Children need to become accustomed to recognizing works of art. Using art as a warm-up exercise offers an opportunity to be exposed to black art. Later children could be re-exposed to similar

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78 Dover, op. cit., p. 127, Plate 53.
pictures for further discussion. The children could try to identify the title and author of the work of art. It is also useful in recognizing distortion of facial features, common in African art.

Using black art as a warm-up exercise also exposes students to the black experience. The pictures were selected to stimulate the imagination of the students. This is the primary function. But the pictures, it is hoped, will also stimulate the memory of the children involved to keep fresh in their minds the memory of the black experience. Thus, students would not only become familiar with the author of black art in any medium, but his experience in a particular social reality.

Warming up with black art also offers children a viable medium for sharing of experiences. By sharing the discussion, the children become accustomed to "pooling" resources in an attempt to answer questions.

**Summary**

What any warm-up exercise should do is provide participants with a vehicle for the exploration of common experiences and an opportunity for sharing those experiences. Proper warm-up facilitates better sociodramatic experience.

Art as a warm-up exercise for sociodrama with black students has numerous learning possibilities. In addition to providing reinforcement and enrichment learning for the black experience, black art can teach children distortion as an African art form and the art of using geometric shapes for
masks. Black art should be explored thoroughly in education through warm-up. Other methods of warm-up are also worthwhile. These methods, described thoroughly by Weiner and Sacks, could also be modified with black art or history.

Case 5. Sociodrama and Discipline in an Elementary School

Sociodrama and role-playing have been used in recent years to counsel black children having difficulty with others in the school setting. Mark Jones used role-playing with a multi-ethnic group in Colorado to reach specific interpersonal problems. The author also found sociodrama particularly useful with black students having difficulty. However, these were adolescent students. Others have used sociodrama similarly.

There are many elementary school children that need particular counseling and discipline. Case 5 used sociodrama in a disciplinary program for elementary school students: (1) to help children with their problems and (2) to help children share in a discussion of problems.

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81 Ron Simmons, op. cit.
Participants

Nine boys participated in Case 5 over a period of two days. The participants were virtually all black, mostly middle-class students. This medium-sized school has all the problems of a larger school.

Procedure

Children are referred to the Vice-Principal for discipline. Often two or three students might be referred for the same reasons. Students referred for the same reasons were allowed to tell their stories together. For instance, students often complain about teachers "picking on them." Here a common problem is identified for sociodrama.

Step 1: Warm-Up - Participants were given a 3x5 index card and asked to list several problems associated with the school. The cards were collected and read to the group. Many students had questions or comments to add to the statements presented below. During the discussion, common problems of the group were identified for dramatization. Most students indicated that other students and even teachers "picked on" and teased them. The discussion leader presented the problem to the group.

Several students who have received their final warning from the school before expulsion decided to come together to help each other. Most of them claimed that the teachers did not understand them.

The children were allowed to prepare for the sociodrama by dividing into groups of 3 to 5 members. The children were allowed to discuss the functions of each role and designate...
characters to dramatize the roles.

**Step 2: Sociodrama** - Part of the sociodrama of problem students appears below:

Teacher (Daryl T., a sixth grader, was very adamant in his disdain for white teachers.)

Student 1 (Barbara W., mostly just talkative and always in the "office" because of it.)

Student 2 (Charlie Y., a fifth grader who is extremely active.)

Student 3 (Hubert, a fourth grader, sulks constantly.)

Teacher: And now I would like to begin today's . . . Would you please stop that talking.

Student 1: I wasn't talking!

Teacher: I didn't say you were talking.

Student 2: You were looking over here.

Teacher: Don't get smart.

Student 3: (under his breath but loud enough for teacher to hear) I can't stand her.

Teacher (loudly): What did you say?

Student 3 (quietly): Nothing.

Teacher: All three of you go to the office.

The sociodrama should be unrehearsed and spontaneous.

**Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama** - Spontaneity testing was used to rate the performers on the basis of (1) the ability of the performers to immerse into the roles played and (2) the realness of the performances. Raters used a one-to-five rating scale (Chart 6). Non-participating members also rated the dramatization. Chart 8 is a representation of the spontaneity...
testing. Reading vertically under the heading "Barbara," the reader can readily observe that Barbara received four very poor ratings. Most raters believed Barbara to be dishonest in her performance, reflecting an unreal presentation. Teachers also rated herself poorly. Further sociodrama improved the ratings.

Summary

Most students were able to recognize many of the reasons that they had been sent to the office. All of the students began to seek ways to avoid trouble. Alternatives were 'worked out' through sociodrama and rated with spontaneity testing.

Sociodrama and spontaneity testing can prove to be valuable tools in facilitating understanding of problems related to discipline in the public schools. Children can recognize certain problems through sociodrama and learn how to avoid trouble. Once children can learn to recognize related problems, help can be available.

Since children need help with problems, discipline in the form of punishment is often inadequate. Solving discipline problems permanently is more important than temporarilyquieting the disruptive child. The life of a child may be changed by the attitude of the teachers and administrators. Educators must begin to spend the time and effort needed to improve the environment that creates discipline problems.
Case 6. Sociodrama and Counseling in an Enrichment Program For Inner City Students

One hundred and twenty-three fifth and sixth graders attended a six-week summer program at a private suburban school. The children attended the independent school daily. This program was termed Supplementary Program for Hartford in Education Reinforcement and Enrichment.

Most of the students, considered average or below in intelligence, found it difficult to adjust daily to the contrast of home life and school. Although there were numerous sports and social activities, including free hot meals, the emphasis was on academic endeavors.

Most students were in school to improve and most showed improvement. The average reading growth rate improved from .73 to .94 according to preliminary studies. Students, however, had other problems requiring counseling.

Most children that were sent to the office for discipline were sent by their teachers for not taking things seriously or because the "white teachers don't understand me." Many of the problems were serious enough to require immediate attention. Other students seemed to be bringing problems from home. The purpose of Case 6 is to foster awareness and recognition of students' concerns through sociodrama.

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84 The writer served as counselor for SPHERE two consecutive summers.
Participants

Step 1: Warm-Up - A discussion circle was initiated with the seven students. Each student was given a three-by-five index card and instructed to write down the reason they had been sent to detention. On the same card, students were asked to indicate problems related to that referral and perhaps other referrals. "If you have ever been to detention or in trouble before, indicate the reason." Most students had been in trouble before. Here are several typical reasons:

"Slapping the teacher in regular school."
"Swearing at the teacher."
"Fighting."
"Putting up my middle finger in class."

(These are things that infuriate teachers to the point of almost uncontrollable anger.) A discussion began (warm-up) concerning the reasons for their detention. "What happened in class to bring you here?" Most students were more than willing to talk.

Step 2: Sociodrama - Once the discussion had matured, sociodrama was introduced. The following statement was used to lead into the sociodrama:

Several students were swearing and yelling at each other in the classroom. When the teacher interrupted, they started arguing with the teacher.

Students used the procedure for sociodrama, first choosing the participants and the format and then preparing for the dramatization.

Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama - Spontaneity testing was used to analyze the performances of students. Each student
rated the performance according to (1) the ability of participants to immerse themselves in the roles and (2) the socially acceptable role behavior. Below is a typical grid showing the testing process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rater</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Charles</th>
<th>Larry</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Sookie</th>
<th>Phillip</th>
<th>Nannie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Charles</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sookie</td>
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<td>Phillip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nannie</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Sookie rated herself five, which may show a fair measure of honesty because the others seemed to agree. She admitted that she has a bad temper, but so does her teacher. Others agree that Sookie's behavior was not good. On the other hand, James thought his behavior was very good, while most others felt that it was not good.

Each rating was discussed in terms of the criteria for rating, each person giving the reason for the ratings. An analysis of the performances and the ratings allowed students to see themselves and others in a new light. Students were able to reenact sociodramas until better ratings were given.
Summary

Behavior cannot usually be changed in a matter of hours. It was not expected to change. It was hoped, instead, that students might begin to take a critical look at their actions and begin to reorganize their behavior. Perhaps to think before troublesome behavior occurs.

Most of the students believed that this procedure was helpful. It was better than writing monotonous sentences and it was better than sitting with hands folded. No other counselor or teacher had taken the time to listen to their side of the story concerning their own behavior.

Sociodrama helped these students to see the reality of situations. They had been selected city-wide to participate in this program to help improve their learning. They had been given preferential treatment, excellent instruction, and many educational advantages. Besides, they had been fed lunch and bussed daily to the independent school. They admitted that they lacked certain skills and that they could learn in this school. Thus, sociodrama has also been helpful for illustrative purposes and analysis.
Often children have difficulty understanding intangible and moral concepts related to school conduct, discipline, and classroom behavior. Various methods have been attempted to get children to understand these concepts. Sociodrama and role-playing are perhaps the most familiar methods. Yet, sociodrama cannot be used unless students are adequately prepared. The magic shop, a procedure adopted from group psychotherapy, proved to be helpful.

The magic shop is a special store that trades only items not available in any other store. In this fantasy shop, children can trade items that they do not want for items that they want. Most of the items are intangibles. All items are very important to the development of the children's behavior in school.

Procedure

Nine fifth-grade students formed a group of "bargain hunters" coming into "The Magic Shop." Each child was asked by the storekeeper (usually the teacher) what he would like to trade. Most students spoke immediately but would then ponder for a few minutes. Once students understood the procedure, exceptional trading occurred. After the children had made a choice, the storekeeper would offer them something new. If both parties agreed, the trade would be effected. Below
is an excerpt from a typical format of "The Magic Shop:"

Storekeeper: Good morning, young lady. May I help you?

Ellie: I would like to buy something.

Storekeeper: What did you have in mind?
Ellie: I don't know!

Storekeeper: Do you like school?

Ellie: I guess so.

Storekeeper: Do you finish your work?

Ellie: I get tired of it.

Storekeeper: How would you like patience so that you will take pride in your work and want to finish it?

Ellie: I would like that very much.

Storekeeper: What would you like to trade?

Discussion

The Magic Shop is designed to give students warm-up time before sociodrama to explore problems of a particular significance and to encourage discussion. Although it can be used as a diagnostic device, to discover concerns, its primary function should be as a preliminary to the sociodrama.

The Magic Shop helps children to understand the value and importance of certain kinds of attitudes and behavior. They often quickly learn that certain kinds of behavior are more important and conducive to learning. Most children do not normally articulate these attitudes. Sharing experiences through the Magic Shop occurs frequently.
Students, once familiar with the procedure, enter The Magic Shop and barter vociferously for "items." It is helpful to allow children opportunity for explanation as to why certain "items" were chosen or why certain items are to be traded. Students often become very clever at offering reasons for trading.

Summary

Various warm-up procedures are extremely valuable and highly desirable in certain circumstances. The Magic Shop is unique in that regard. It can be used effectively with intermediate elementary students who generally still possess enough familiarity with fantasy to make the Magic Shop fun.

The Magic Shop can also deal with very real social and moral issues. Those issues that prove to be problems become material for sociodrama. Pride, impatience, love, God, and greed have been interesting topics.

Case 8. Sociodrama and Black History

With College Students

Students of any age generally find it difficult to visualize the world of American historical leaders. Denmark Vesey, Salem Poor, and Benjamin Banneker are all unfamiliar names to most students. Furthermore, students argue that history is irrelevant to modern life. "What difference does it make whether these people are studied?" Students often complain also that the subject matter, no matter how relevant, is still history and very boring. Those that teach black history
or any other discipline must confront this problem almost daily.

There are several ways to confront the problem of boredom in the classroom. A most obvious alternative is making good use of all of the available instructional materials. However, some materials are too expensive, often inappropriate for specific learning styles or unavailable. Most students are eager initially but flounder once difficult work begins.

It is often true that the work is boring or too difficult, but this writer would like to think that students need particular help. Frequently those students who sign up for black history possess tremendous enthusiasm but have the least formal training. There is nothing as discouraging as unrelated work to the ego of revolutionaristic-minded or overzealous students. Social scientists should use that overzealousness to good advantage. Students who have been eager to learn, yet "turned off," can be interested in the new history.

Using sociodrama makes history relevant for students who need "living proof" of the significance of historical events. Students, through sociodrama, have an opportunity to participate in the black history lesson. They also have ample opportunity to relate present personal experiences to the historical events.

---85 This writer has taught black history at Manchester (Conn.) Community College, in the Torrington (Conn.) Adult Education Program, and at the Afro-American Institute in Hartford (Conn.).
Illustration and demonstration through sociodrama is important to the betterment of educational objectives. Students begin to take an interest in history and in themselves. Below is an excerpt from a historical sociodrama.

Procedure

Step 1: Warm-Up - Students were given 3x5 index cards and asked to identify several problems related to the text or several events in the book of particular interest. Once students identified certain issues, a discussion surrounding those statements followed. Additional supportive information would be researched by the students.

Step 2: Sociodrama - Students were fascinated by the stories of valor and courage.

You are an eye-witness to the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Revolutionary War. From what you know about Salem Poor, what might you ask him and what would you do?

Each participant is allowed to volunteer for various assignments. Acting was not important. After several "performances," a discussion occurred.

Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama - Spontaneity testing was used to rate the performances according to authenticity of the historical performance and events. Using a one-to-five scale (Chart 6), the participants rated each performance. Each performance was repeated until it received full satisfaction from all the participants.

Summary

Sociodrama can be used in a variety of group sessions with college-age students, especially those students having difficulty in a specific subject area. In history, for example, sociodrama allows students to visualize historical events from a unique personal perspective.

Once a specific concern is identified, the students can dramatize that concern. Students can either dramatize the historical event by becoming part of the action or remain aloof (akin to "You Are There").

Students then rate performances using spontaneity testing and discussion. Hopefully, more is learned about human behavior in a historical perspective and more is learned about the idiosyncratic behavior and events that have made this country great.

Case 9. Role Reversal and Sociodrama
With Elementary School Children

Frequently it is difficult for children to understand the importance of equitable behavior, kindness, and consideration for others. We live in a society with high ideals, but an often dismal reality. The oppressed black, Puerto Rican, and others are continually mistreated and abused. This study was prompted by the awareness of the writer of this brutal treatment.

Participants

The participants were thirty-two fifth-graders in a self-contained classroom. The composition of the classroom was fourteen Puerto Ricans, two blacks, and sixteen whites. All of the Puerto Ricans sat together and all of the whites sat together. Students were not assigned seats. All of the students came from a similar socioeconomic background but the community was segregated along the lines of the classroom. Puerto Ricans lived in substandard or deteriorating dwellings (as did some whites). Most whites, however, lived in better homes on the opposite side of the school.

Procedure

After a great deal of name-calling, fighting and general hostility among the groups, the writer proceeded to take action.

Step 1: Warm-Up - One 3x5 index card was given to each of the 32 students. The children were instructed to write any feelings or statements about the other groups. Since many of the statements were as hostile as the verbal epithets, discussion was not initiated. Instead, the writer set the stage for sociodrama. "How would you feel if you were in a strange country and could not speak the language?" Responses varied from indifference to compassion.

Step 2: Sociodrama - The following statement was used as a lead-in to the sociodrama:

All of you that speak English can speak English only when spoken to by the teacher. The teacher, however, along with all the Puerto Rican children, will speak Spanish. The entire class will be spoken in Spanish.
Other children will be allowed to conduct the class if they can speak Spanish.

Discussion

Those students that could not speak Spanish were at an obvious disadvantage. They could not leave their seat for any reason because they could not ask in Spanish. The Spanish-speaking children had the edge.

They had complete freedom of movement within the room. They began to sing Spanish songs and tell Spanish jokes. Laughing and joking freely, they used the audio equipment to record their disdain for others.

Although the behavior of both groups was not very hostile, animosity could be observed. The English-speaking group was restless and upset. Having little experience being on the receiving end of frustration, they began to devise an alternative strategy. They began acting out non-verbally, i.e., tapping and banging in protest.

Step 3: Discussion of Sociodrama - The children were allowed to discuss their actions afterwards. Both groups admitted that the situation was distasteful and unfair to all concerned. In the discussion, many alternatives were considered.

Summary

No one should be treated with disrespect simply because they do not understand the language. This was the most overwhelming conclusion by the class. The Spanish-speaking children
were very pleased with the results of the "game."

They could see the anger of the white children and that made them feel as though they were "getting even."

However, some of the non-English-speaking children, especially the girls, were unhappy with the treatment of the whites. The Spanish-speaking students began to feel embarrassed by the extent of their hostility.

The discussion proved to be fruitful. All of the participants admitted that the whole thing was "silly" and that people should not act that way. This became evident in the subsequent meetings among the group members.

Children began changing their seats and sitting next to new people. Non-English began sitting near English-speaking children. The reverse was also true. All students involved exhibited a new interest in the culture and language of others. Many non-English students, previously not very talkative, began to converse with almost everyone. The changes in the attitudes of the children were profound as a result of demonstration through sociodrama.

Case 10. Using Sociodrama in Teacher Training

Frequently people that have had little or no experience teaching underprivileged (oppressed) students do not always know how to respond to certain problems that arise.

CASE 10

88 Ethel Walker School retained the writer as a consultant to facilitate training for the tutors involved in the program.
Teachers from white independent schools especially need this awareness. Their contact with the oppressed is generally superficial or non-existent. What these people know about the oppressed is that they are to be "feared," that they need "help," and that they are "ignorant (but not beyond hope)."

One independent school was part of a pilot project to allow a sizable segment of its student body to receive credit for tutoring fifth and sixth graders in the inner city. The problem was that the girls had virtually no experience working with city children and they were afraid.

Procedure

Warm-Up - Tutors were asked to write concerns about the tutoring program on an index card. After the cards were completed, they were collected by the group leader. The leader compiled the cards and chose the most typical response. Each response was read to the group in order to stimulate discussion.

Most of the cards indicated a lack of understanding over where to begin and what to do. Each tutor was asked to discuss how she would begin. (The discussion moved freely. Each tutor was enthusiastic about the students and the initial meeting.) When the conversation lagged, role testing and


90 J.L. Moreno, op. cit., "Projects in Test and Measurement."
sociodrama were used to encourage discussion. For example:

Two students were having difficulty with arithmetic (borrowing).

One girl volunteered to be the tutor while two others agreed to play the students. These actors would attempt to portray the situation.

**Discussion** - The audience rated the actors, using a similar one-to-five rating scale as shown in Chart 6, according to the raters' estimation of the authenticity of the role behavior. Spontaneity testing was used and evaluated by the tutors. Afterwards, a discussion occurred to evaluate the performances. Participants discussed methods of instruction for various learning styles and attitudes.

Throughout the discussion, tutors expressed a better understanding of teaching problems. The tutors attributed that understanding to sociodrama. Some tutors believed that they would be more relaxed and less afraid of the students.
CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A NEW AMERICAN REALITY
IN EDUCATION - AN OVERVIEW

An American historical perspective with a fundamental ethnic and racial orientation may reveal a new reality regarding American culture. Despite common tradition and goals among blacks and whites, however, Americans are prone to exaggerate and accentuate ethnic and cultural differences. Especially in education, social scientists are confusing the importance of ethnic prowess with the need to placate ethnic differences. The differences between the two philosophies are profound. One is racist, the other is not. One is very unhealthy, the other is not.

Rather intelligent and responsible Americans somehow are misguided by illogical and irrelevant tradition. Social scientists especially allow themselves to be ruled by the dictates of that apoplectic tradition. It is a tradition that rests on a negative image of black Americans. It is derisive negativism perpetuated by bigots as well as sincere people, both black and white.

Unfortunately, the entire American society is being victimized and emasculated by these misconceptions and malevolent misunderstandings, many of them perfectly obvious upon discussion.

-82-
It fosters fear and mistrust, at worst, and banality and boredom in American life, at best. There are very few studies that discuss the black poor, for example, without painting a lurid picture of insecurity, matriarchal emasculation, depravity, and obsequious passivity. It is not easy being black. But what Americans must begin to realize is that black Americans have endured. Those who are not confined to the dictates of social science jargon, black and white, are aware of this situation. The heritage of black America is great, for black people have been able to compete, have fun and survive under very miserable conditions.

Black Americans are human beings, living in a dehumanizing society. Once social scientists realize that blacks are real people, changes in education will be much easier. Fear by whites caused by the image of inferior blacks will disappear.

The segregation and subsequent oppression of blacks is due mostly to color. White norms that equate non-white with inferior (less than normal) can only be accomplished in a nation that categorizes human behavior solely in terms of race.

Black Americans (and other oppressed minorities) are human, red-blooded and healthy. Social scientists, however, seem to forget that point when research is begun. Black Americans are not inferior (less than American, or subhuman).
And blacks who subscribe to this viewpoint are truly being snowed. For example, when prominent black leaders, moderate and militant alike, entertain thoughts of "back to Africa," they are denying an entire American heritage - a heritage that comes alive through sociodrama. If these leaders were truly knowledgeable, they would never seriously entertain that notion.

The black American is a unique breed of man - not solely African yet one hundred per cent American. The black American (and other American minorities) is a mixture of those other groups and those other groups contain some black. The solely American phenomenon is what Albert Murray calls the Omni-American. When blacks were slaves, they mingled with whites and Indians, producing a uniquely American individual. Even if one denies that heritage, one must recognize the present reality.

The oppressed are blacks, whites, the poor, the Indian, Chicano, and Puerto Rican. Anyone who must live with the banking deposit system is oppressed. Anyone who must endure the studies of social scientists may be oppressed. A new strategy is needed to cope with this massive problem. So social scientists must do all of the following to move toward a new strategy:

- discontinue thinking only in terms of race and categorizing human behavior in terms of race.

There are many black poor because of the racist feelings of people in authority, i.e., the Southern sheriff who denies
welfare to a Mississippi sharecropper. Despite feelings of racial superiority, many whites are poor. Being poor is a condition that produces depression, fear, and bitterness.

What makes people poor in America is not just racist authority, but corporate inconsideration for humanity. (In some parts of the country, black and white poor are seeing some commonality in their condition.)

- recognize the heritage of the black American in a different perspective.

Slavery was the most inhumane and degrading American institution recent history has known. Yet not all blacks were slaves. Even in the late 1700's there was a growing number of skilled black craftsmen and artisans. Also, despite the inhumane treatment, many slaves learned to read, and write, had time to pray, and learn religion, and often managed to con the "master" out of nearly everything. Black American heritage is varied and should be treated as such.

Sociodrama, or any other learning device, cannot alleviate the pressures of black-white relations. Yet, sociodrama more than most other interpersonal methods allows greater freedom to share honestly and illustrate discussion material.

Sharing honestly can be accomplished through spontaneity testing and role testing. Myriad possibilities exist for an industrious educator anxious to ameliorate oppression and misunderstanding in education. Several methods have been outlined in this thesis, yet many possibilities remain
untapped. Sociodrama could be used in school-community relations programs where racial issues may be exposed. Educators and key community people could be readily trained to use various methods of sociodrama and spontaneity testing.

Sociodrama could also be used in actual classroom training for pre-service and in-service teachers. Other teachers, along with supervisors, would then evaluate the lessons and provide feedback. Teachers would hopefully gain valuable data to be used in the future.

Sociodrama can remain a valuable tool to educators if it is used properly with trained personnel and inventive educators. The future of sociodrama in education rests with the strength of these individuals to pursue viable alternatives to solve America’s number one problem - racism in education.

This thesis is a good beginning. It demonstrates that sociodrama can be used to illustrate and evaluate solipsistic attitudes among white teachers. Used properly with role testing and spontaneity testing, sociodrama can become an important group method in education.

When used to supplement social studies (or perhaps other subject areas), sociodrama can illustrate the ability of black Americans (and others) to endure hardships and survive. Merely projecting successful role models is obviously insufficient to produce some change. But good discussion, honest peer evaluation of performances, and good feedback begin to change the way educators and students alike view the black
American and themselves. In that respect, sociodrama challenges the entire banking deposit system as we know it today. The banking deposit system is typical of one-way education designs that attempt to educate by depositing and “spoon-feeding” irrelevant and sometimes erroneous material into children's minds. Children have no control over the selection or dissemination of that body of knowledge, which often makes it difficult for these children to sustain interest in their education.

Sociodrama allows students to select much of the material since the learner and his concerns are the subject matter. The learner’s concerns are identified and discussed in the “gripe session” or warm-up. In Case 1, for example, role inventory was used in conjunction with discussion for warm-up. This procedure seems to work better with adults than with children. Adults seem better able to handle a personal inventory whereas children function better with group inventory. (Spontaneity testing and role testing are examples of group sharing in the inventory.) Other preliminary sociodrama techniques are designed specifically for participants less willing to share concerns with others. Listing concerns on index cards is often beneficial. Cases 2, 3, and 8 concerning race and culture and Case 5 and 6 are excellent examples of the use of index cards to reach concerns and encourage worthwhile discussion. While these warm-up exercises may contribute to adequate group sharing and proper diagnosis of problems, participants sometimes are
unwilling or unable to share because of difficulties in verbalizing and articulating personal concerns. Less direct methods often become useful when participants are shy. Cases 4 and 7 are useful examples. Students discuss the "generalized" problem. It is hoped, of course, that the discussion would lead to more particular concerns. All of the warm-up procedures prove to be invaluable tools, nonetheless, to students and teachers having difficulties in school.

Participants gain valuable insight into problems through sociodrama. Although many problems that arise in discussion cannot be solved through sociodrama, participants can begin to verbalize concerns about teachers and school (Case 6) or about racism (Case 3). Participants also have an opportunity to learn subject matter through sociodrama (Cases 4 and 8).

Sociodrama, despite a history of misuse, can become a valuable educational tool and instructional device for teachers and counselors. Knowledge can be gained by all participants, teachers and students alike concerning moral issues, racial issues, and core subjects. Sociodrama can become an important learning device in all aspects of education.
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