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Connection And Commitment: Exploring The Generation And Experience of Emotion In A Participatory Drama

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Abstract

Emotion is a complex and important aspect of participatory drama experience. This is because drama work of this kind provokes emotional responses to both actual and dramatic worlds. This paper identifies two key features of participatory drama that influence the generation and experience of emotion: commitment and connection. These features are discussed and then applied to create a framework designed to support facilitator understanding about the relationship between these features. The framework is aimed at identifying how, at any given moment in a drama, the intensity of commitment and connection impact on each individual participant's experience of emotion. Based on research conducted across three different contexts and with both children and adults, the authors suggest that an understanding of emotion is critical for those who are engaged in facilitating participatory drama work.

Introduction

This article emerges from the collaborative and reflective discussions of three experienced drama practitioners who together embarked on a journey to develop a deeper understanding of the experience of emotion in participatory forms of drama. In particular, we hoped to identify those features of these forms that influence the generation and intensity of participants' emotional responses. We brought to these conversations a keen desire to interrogate our own and each other's experiences as both participants and facilitators. We also shared the view that a defining feature of participatory drama, as an aesthetic medium, is the simultaneous provocation of both the cognitive and affective domains and the view that the experience of emotion is critical to meaning making.

We understood that this journey would take us through challenging waters, for emotions are complex, ephemeral, highly individual and difficult to research. This is especially the case within those dramatic forms where individuals draw on their unique lived experiences, knowledge, attitudes and values as they actively participate within the work. In addition, we understood that the social, political and cultural context, in which each participatory drama is realized, has a significant influence and must also be taken into account. As well, we recognized that emotional responses are neither fixed nor singular, shifting rapidly from one moment to the next. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by choosing to explore emotion based mainly on our perceptions as facilitators, together with the anecdotes shared informally with us by participants both within and beyond these dramas, we knew that our conclusions would inevitably be partial and only a very tentative first step toward understanding this key aspect of participatory drama. But fledgling ideas were already starting to take shape within our discussions, so we pushed on, choosing not to see these challenges as impediments to our investigations, but rather, as part of the enticement of exploring this rich and complex area of human experience.

The reflection that follows was written by Julie following her facilitation of a particular participatory drama, in this case a process drama. It provides a context to frame our discussion, offering readers a glimpse into the type of practice that is at the heart of our pedagogy. It also provides the reader with some insights into why we were interested in pursuing this exploration.

> *The room is dimly lit. 20 young tertiary Applied Theatre students enrolled in an introductory drama course are participating in a drama workshop based on Tennessee Williams' play, "*A Streetcar Named Desire"*. With a dramatic focus relating to the role of bystanders in the cycle of domestic violence, participants were asked to take on one of four roles based on key characters in the play: Stella, Stanley, Mitch (Stanley's card playing friend) or Eunice (Stella's neighbor and confidante). The drama had several*

goals: to provoke discussion and reflection about domestic violence; to highlight the potential of participatory drama to stimulate discussion about important social issues; and to demonstrate a number of strategies that might be useful for these students to add to their developing repertoire as facilitators of future workshops.

Having already explored within the drama aspects of the relationship between Stella and Stanley, including suggestions that Stanley is an abusive husband, I use a narration strategy to time jump the drama twenty years into the future. Through this narration, the participants hear that Stella and Stanley have had a daughter, who is now a young woman. Seriously injured, she lies in a hospital bed, the victim of abuse at the hands of her new husband – a young man very similar in temperament to her father. As facilitator, I ask the group how this tragedy might have been avoided and invite the participants to speak from within their roles. What follows is powerful – with the students using language in emotionally charged, sometimes aggressive, sometimes reflective, sometimes poetic ways as they step forward to accuse, condemn, blame or encourage the various characters involved. Beside me, one of the participants begins to sob gently. She does not move away however (in spite of being experienced in this kind of work and aware that participation is always voluntary and that she can of course step back from the work at any time). Instead, another participant simply drapes her arm around the girl's shoulder and the drama moves on. Later, together, we reflect out of role on the experience and the meanings made or not made within that two-hour event. Emotion emerges as a common theme – but not just sadness, anger too, as well as hopelessness and even joy at being part of what some described as a strong aesthetic experience. The sobbing student reveals that because of some personal but not intense experiences of domestic violence, she had selected the role of Eunice in order to gain protection within the drama. However, in spite of this role choice she claims that the drama has still had a strong emotional impact on her. She goes on to explain that she has appreciated the experience, describing it as cathartic. Other participants disagree. They argue that the experience has been too confronting…opening wounds, one says, going on to note that she was only able to gain distance and thus protection by "mentally disengaging". By contrast, one male student announces that he revelled in the experience, enjoying the fact that it offered him insights into domestic violence, but was surprised that it had generated what felt like genuine anger. He claims that the drama has scared him. He didn't know that he was capable of becoming so deeply engaged in drama work. Later he tells me that he was intrigued by his reaction to the drama and within it. He said that with no previous personal experience of domestic violence, he had not bothered to put up any barriers when taking on the role of Stanley. In his words, 'he had not tried to stop himself from getting too involved'. He suggests that his response was most likely created by the framing of the drama and goes on to

> *note that one of the goals of the drama must have been to provoke the emotions of the participants through manipulation of a range of tensions.*

This vignette was of particular interest to us as we commenced our discussions, for it captures and illustrates several areas of complexity in relation to how different individuals respond to participatory drama work. For example, it reveals how two quite different emotions can be experienced simultaneously by the one participant; delight and sadness, joy and anger. It also serves to highlight how the adoption of a fictional role introduces an additional layer of complexity to emotional experience.

To support our discussion here, we draw not only on the drama described in the vignette above, but also on our experiences as facilitators within two further participatory dramas. The first of these was facilitated by Julie and observed by Madonna as part of a small-scale research project that involved primary school aged children in a Year 1 class (5-6 years old) from an urban fringe school close to Brisbane, Australia. Conducted for 90 minutes daily across a full school week, our purpose in engaging the children in this drama was to explore the links between drama, narrative competence and written literacy. Data collected included video recordings of the lessons, observation notes, reflective dialogues and artifacts created by the children in response to the work. The narrative of the drama, developed especially for the study, appeared to generate a range of emotional responses from the participating children, ranging from frustration to delight. In role as the members of a council of little people, a section of the drama involved problem solving about how to achieve the release of one of their own, captured by a selfish young girl called Sally (for a full description of this drama see Dunn & Stinson, 2012).

The second was created for implementation within a research project funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant and was facilitated by Penny and Julie. Consisting of a number of smaller projects, each focused on exploring the use of drama to assist in the process of re-settling newly arrived refugees living in Logan City, south of Brisbane, this particular drama was developed for a class of mixed-age newly arrived children with little (and in some cases no) English and no shared language. Extending across six two-hour sessions, the pretext used to trigger the work was again a specifically created story, this time about a robot named Rollo who has come to Earth searching for her lost dog, Sparky (for a full description of this drama see Dunn, Bundy and Woodrow, 2012). In role as Rollo, Penny appeals to the children for help, but like them she struggles to communicate her needs because of limited English. Over the weeks that follow, the children become empowered as problem solvers as they teach and support Rollo. The fictional story created by the children as the drama unfolded, included a successful quest for the lost dog, a visit from Rollo's mother, and a wedding for Rollo and her robot friend.

The purpose of this paper then is to communicate the shared but tentative understandings that have emerged as a result of our discussions, reflections and explorations across these three dramas. Resulting in a framework designed to map factors that influence emotional responses to participatory drama work, the paper focuses on two key aspects of participation that appear to be significant contributors to the generation and intensity of emotion: commitment and connection.

Before outlining this framework, we begin with a discussion of the literature that has influenced our thinking. Next we offer an overview of our framework, accompanied by examples to clarify its application. The paper concludes with an interrogation of the value of this framework, including discussion of its possible implications for facilitators and plans for further research in this area.

Some Informing Literature

The reflective and collaborative dialogues at the core of this paper have been informed by our various understandings of the role and impact of emotion in participatory drama and theatre experiences. Most significant perhaps is our shared interest in Gavin Bolton's work, whose contribution in this area heavily influenced our early development as drama educators. In particular, we were all highly persuaded by Bolton's notion (1984, p. 128) that our responsibility as facilitators is not to protect our participants from emotions but rather, into them. Other influences have been more varied and include work from theatre studies (Ben Chaim, 1984; Hurley, 2010; Konijn 1999, Sauter, 2009; Schoenmakers, 1988; Stanislavsky, 1995) and philosophy (Dewey, 1934; Koestler, 1975). In this section we will highlight some key ideas drawn from these various sources and our responses to them, starting with Bolton's work (1984, 1986a and 1986b).

In discussing emotion in drama, Bolton suggests that there are three controllable components: dual affect (which he suggests involves first and second order emotions), intensity and quality. This idea of first order and second order emotions seems somewhat similar to Stanislavski's (1995, p.112) description of two kinds of truth, with one being automatic and a response to actual events and the other originating in human response to the 'imaginative and artistic fiction'. Regarding first and second order emotion, Bolton states:

> Drama does not require that people actually faint, that they scream themselves into an hysterical ecstasy, that they hit each other in rage. It does require a no less real but a different order of emotions: children should experience a deep concern, a genuine elation, a feeling of anger. Providing the response is to the symbolic situation, then all the emotions that belong to living, that playwrights have handled as their stock-in-

> trade, are the proper stuff of creative drama experience, whatever the age of the child. (1986a, p.90)

This assertion, that the stimulation of emotion is appropriate, so long as it is created in response to the symbolic situation, was reassuring to us in our early considerations of this topic, but upon reflection somewhat challenging. For example, in the vignette above, the tears shed by the young girl and the anger experienced by the young man, were certainly generated in part by their involvement in the dramatic action, including the fictional circumstances of the drama, the responses of other participants, and the aesthetic choices of the facilitator. But it is unlikely that these were the only or indeed major factors. Instead, these particular participants appeared to also be responding to either their direct life experiences or more general understandings of humanity and their own positions in society. Perhaps this relates to Boal's (1995, p.13) idea that 'theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself'.

Given this complex relationship between experiences within the form of drama and beyond it, McConnachie's (2007) work relating to audience and his ideas about conceptual blending are also relevant. In this work, he rejects Coleridge's notion of the willing suspension of disbelief, which he suggests implies a sense of something being "taken away", in favour of one that positions the theatre experience as one that offers more. Acknowledging ideas originally introduced by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), McConnachie suggests that audience members accept both the fiction and the reality and respond to the combination of these, with the outcome being a response that has the potential to be more powerful than one occurring outside of the symbolic situation.

These ideas are also supported in Schoenmakers' (1988, p.139) work which earlier claimed that human intellectual and emotional responses to a performed event in the theatre have the potential to be greater and more complex than if we were to witness that same event in reality. He claims that this is due to the fact that within theatre events we both look for more and see more. Bolton's ideas (1984) in the context of participatory drama work are related. He has argued that drama creates a bracketing of experience where the pretence of the drama allows the participants to experience emotion more intensely because they know there are no repercussions.

In another work however, Bolton has also argued (1986a, p.92) that drama should not be an 'escape into the fictitious so that everything is felt but nothing is understood'. In this comment, he appears to be suggesting that dramatic contexts that generate emotion without meaning are problematic, going on to add the view (again similar to the claims of Stanislavsky, 1995) that intense feelings in drama are 'dependent on each participant drawing

on relevant affective memories' (1986a, p.92). In fact, Bolton (1983, p. 60) has argued that, 'the most significant change in understanding through drama must be at the subjective level of feeling.' Again, his views are useful, for they remind facilitators that while the generation of emotion based on personal experience is important, these emotions should not be permitted to dominate and as such override the all important cognitive responses that should accompany them.

There are others, including Scheff (1979) who might claim, like the student herself, that the emotional responses described above, including the tears prompted by the work, were cathartic. His ideas are worth quoting at length:

> When we cry over the fate of Romeo and Juliet, we are reliving our own personal experiences of overwhelming loss, but under new and less severe conditions. The experience of vicarious loss in a properly designed drama is sufficiently distressful to awaken old distress. It is also sufficiently vicarious however, so that the emotion does not feel overwhelming...Cathartic crying, laughing and other emotional processes occur when unresolved emotional distress is re-awakened in a properly distanced context. (p.13)

With this comment, Scheff appears to be suggesting that the security offered by a carefully designed drama, provides the appropriate conditions to relive and awaken past experiences and that such awakenings are valuable and indeed cathartic. However catharsis is a somewhat contested term, with widely varying definitions being offered. Nussbaum's (1986) work in this area is particularly significant for she believes that Aristotle's term has been incorrectly translated. Oatley (1994, p.71) draws on her views to argue that catharsis does not mean 'purgation or purification (the usual translations implying something wrong with emotions), but clarification – coming to understand one's emotions in relation to the characters in the play and to one's self'. Such a definition gives new value to catharsis and seems highly relevant to our work in drama where meaning making is our goal.

Introducing the Framework

Detailed reflective conversations about our experiences within and across these three dramas, resulted in the shared view that commitment and connection appear to be the two key dimensions of participation most likely to influence the nature and intensity of emotions experienced by participants. While these dimensions are clearly related and interdependent, for the purposes of our emerging understanding, we decided to consider them separately.

What do we mean by commitment?

In a general sense we see commitment as being about a willingness to engage in the exploration of a specific human focus, within a group context, using the medium of drama. Such commitment would therefore see individuals actively and willingly participate in the co-construction of a shared dramatic world through 'an investment of oneself in the knowing' (Bolton, 1986c, p. 19). As such, at any given moment within a drama, a range of factors including the trust group members have in their fellow participants, the facilitator and themselves might influence levels of commitment. This commitment would also be affected by a willingness to accept the material being explored, irrespective of personal views on it, including the possible exploration of oppositional or new ideas. Ultimately then, participants most strongly committed to the work, are likely to be accepting of the idea that the topic or focus is appropriate, accepting of their fellow participants and the facilitator, and willing to commit to the real time of the drama.

Aspects that might influence this commitment, both positively and negatively, include confidence, purpose or understanding of purpose, cultural and ethical values, and previous experience of the form, content and context. Rules also influence commitment including rules that are social, compulsory or enforced, those of politeness and sensitivity to others, and institutional rules or demands from beyond the drama such as assessment.

By describing commitment in this way, we are not arguing that extreme levels of commitment or acceptance of all that is offered in the name of drama is necessarily, or always, a positive. There will be times when participants might rightly challenge aspects of the work and withdraw commitment, including those times when they feel that commitment to the work signals implicit agreement with the material or approach being used, irrespective of its risks. Participants may also feel uncomfortable with the material being explored for other reasons.

What do we mean by connection?

The second factor we see as influencing the intensity and nature of specific emotional responses to drama work is that of connection. Together we discussed this term in some detail, and while we appeared to share a strong intuitive sense of what *we* meant by it, we struggled to find the appropriate language to convey this understanding to others. Here Penny's earlier thinking and the conclusions she drew about connection as a component of aesthetic engagement (Bundy, 2003; 2004), including her exploration of Koestler (1975) and Collinson's (1992) work, contributed usefully to our discussions. In particular we were intrigued by Collinson's description of her response to Picasso's painting, *Woman Weeping*. Our reading of this description is that the artwork evoked in her a genuine sense of grief that was not stimulated merely by the form and content of the painting. Unlike a drama experience

where emotion is actually present, a painting cannot itself contain grief. Yet it can evoke a sense of grief in the percipient if they experience a sense of recognition of something important to them beyond the work itself.

Collinson's response to this visual artwork ironically helped to us to gain a greater understanding of connection in the context of participatory drama. It lead us to suggest that connection involves a sense of recognition, with this recognition being triggered by aspects of the drama that are meaningful for the participants beyond the drama itself. These aspects within the drama could include: the roles adopted; the focus of the work including the situations and human relationships being explored; and/or the tasks required of the participants.

A similar exploration of connection, this time offered by Randee Lawrence (2008), further supported our efforts to put into words our shared understanding of connection. In this article she describes her confusion as she tried to analyse her strong emotional response to a live performance of *Cry (for all black women everywhere especially our mothers)* by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. She notes (p. 66): 'I am riveted. I stop breathing. I feel a chill, and there is the heaviness of tears behind my eyes. I am not Black, my ancestors were not slaves, and at this time I have not yet given birth to a child. I am nevertheless deeply affected'. In this way she is attempting to tease out the notion of connection. Like Collinson's example above, the form of work itself appears to have played a significant part, whilst her connections to its content are not direct or personal, the result of specific experiences, but rather ideas emerging from her connection to other humans whose experiences evoke in her a strong sense of empathy.

These two examples offer the clearest explanation of our emerging understanding of connection.

Exploring the Framework

Once definitions of these concepts were teased out, our key challenge then lay in attempting to articulate our understanding of how they operated in relationship to each other, and as a result, a framework made up of two axes (see Figure 1) emerged.



Figure 1. The framework

The X-axis relates to our perceptions of the strength of an individual's connection to the drama in any given moment. The extreme right end of this axis represents the strongest sense of connection, whilst the far left signals the weakest. The Y-axis, is used to demonstrate our understanding in relation to the continuum of participant commitment, with the top of this axis being used to indicate highly committed participation while the bottom indicates weak or defensive commitment.

By plotting our perceptions of participation across these axes, we hoped that we might be able to gain insights into how emotion operates in process drama. In the following section, the four quadrants of this framework are discussed, with examples drawn from the three projects described above being used to illustrate and support the discussion.

Quadrant A



Figure 2. Quadrant A

We begin our exploration with the upper left quadrant (A) (see Figure 2 above) which we have been using to support our understanding of the emotional responses generated when participation appears to be characterized by limited connection but high commitment. Here, an individual at any given moment within a drama may be keenly committed to the form, the group, the facilitator or all three, but may nevertheless be unable to make any points of connection with the work itself. This inability to connect may be caused by the focus of the drama, the roles on offer or the situations being explored. So how might these factors influence emotional response?

Sifting through our perceptions of participation across the three sample dramas, we identified multiple examples of this type of participation, with perhaps the clearest of these occurring within the drama relating to Rollo the robot and involving the newly arrived refugee children. Occurring in the final frame of this drama, as Rollo's wedding takes place, our reflections, recorded immediately following this session, offer a shared view that many of the children appeared to be "acting out" the emotions that the drama context called for, rather than expressing a genuine emotional response to the work. As they offered words of congratulations and best wishes to the "bride and groom'', there appeared to be little authenticity in the way their ideas were expressed, suggesting that at least some of the children were simply complying with our instructions and aiming to please the teachers. Of course, language may have been a factor here, with formal presentations to a bride and groom in an unfamiliar language being too challenging for many, but our perceptions as facilitators within this moment were that this was not the case. Rather, we felt that many of the children

simply saw this task as a chance to practice their English, with little connection to these roles or this situation being apparent.

As such, we are proposing that the emotions generated at these times (when commitment was high but connection weak) may be superficial, limited or non-existent. They might also be aspirational. By this we mean that participants might simply pretend that they are experiencing emotion by creating a 'performed' version of what they believe emotion might look like in these contexts. Both Stanislavsky (1991) and Bolton (1980) comment on this type of artificial response. Discussing some earlier drama in education practices, Bolton (1980, p.81) states that drama educators have often 'trained children to "switch on" imitative emotional display' so that they give a demonstration of emotions that has little to do with genuine feeling.

Quadrant B

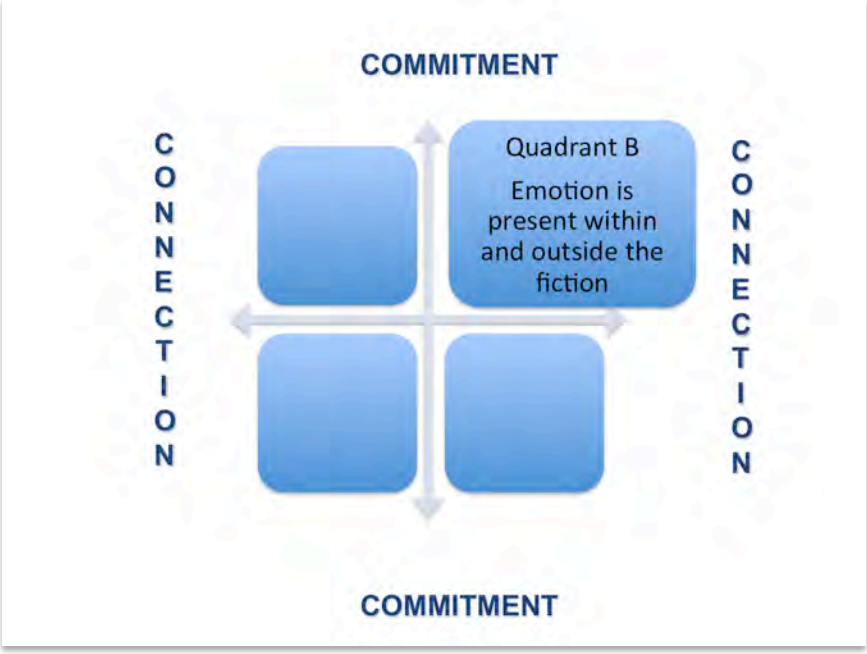


Figure 3. Quadrant B

In direct contrast, a moment occurring earlier in this same drama provided us with a clear example of participation that we believe belongs in the top right hand quadrant (B) of our framework (see Figure 3). As in the previous example relating to the wedding, the majority of participants appeared once again to be highly committed to the drama work. What was different in this moment however was that this commitment seemed to be accompanied by a strong sense of connection to both the characters and the immediate situation being explored.

At this moment emotions ranging from joy to relief were widely evident as Sparky (see Image 1), the runaway robot dog, suddenly appeared at the classroom door to be reunited with his family.



Image 1. Sparky the robot dog

Having offered Rollo substantial support as she searched for this lost and beloved pet, considerable empathy for her situation had previously been revealed through both the children's written work and their interactions with us. As such, Sparky the dog's surprise appearance created a storm of excitement. Considering these children's experiences prior to arriving in Australia, it was probably inevitable that a reunion such as this one would engender strong connections. Of course, these connections would be likely for any child who has ever wanted, loved or lost a pet irrespective of their family backgrounds, but for some of these children, this experience of reunion may have been particularly poignant since displacement and loss were experiences within their own personal histories. Here then, the children's willingness to commit to the drama, together with strong personal connections to the ideas presented within the work, seemed to generate intense and shared emotional responses. Indeed, some twelve months later, during follow up interviews conducted to inform our understanding of the children's experiences (now with the benefit of much improved conversational English), Sparky's arrival was a moment both vividly recalled and fondly remembered, still capable of generating broad smiles and genuine joy.

It could also be argued that some of the responses described within the *Streetcar Named Desire* vignette offered earlier also belong within this quadrant, perhaps explaining why the emotions of these particular participants were so raw and, for some, so overwhelming. Here

their commitment to drama generally and this participatory form in particular, combined with strong personal connections to ideas explored within the *Streetcar* work, seem to have been two key influencing factors. These sometimes-intense personal connections were made in spite of the planned strategies for distancing built into this drama. These included the drama's non-realistic structuring with multiple participants playing the same roles, non-naturalistic strategies such as eavesdropping of paired role-plays and the frequent use of out-of-role reflective discussions designed to interrupt and disrupt strong emotional connection in favour of additional cognitive connection with the focus question.

Of interest to us as well, is the participant in the *Streetcar* drama who chose to create her own protection by adopting a defensive stance within the work. Her comment, suggesting that she intentionally disengaged from the work in order to gain additional protection, was clearly significant in helping us to understand participation that might belong within the bottom right hand quadrant (D), where connections are strong but commitment is weak or indeed resistant (see Figure 5). However, before moving on to discuss this quadrant, a further example relating to quadrant B, this time involving the year one children who participated in the *Little People* drama, is useful.

Our example here relates specifically to a frame of the drama that saw the children take role as members of a 'Council of Little People', with the emotions produced at this time appearing to be multi-layered, including anger, frustration, and concern 'in the drama' and, concurrently, delight 'about it'. Challenged to decide whether or not to grant a wish in exchange for the freedom of a captured member of their community, the children were invited by the Council Leader (teacher-in-role) to vote on and justify their individual decisions. In reacting to this request, the children responded with great solemnity and thoughtful care. Remarkably, in spite of their young age and inexperience in matters of such importance, without exception they, one-by-one, offered thoughtful, carefully considered and highly varied rationales for their voting decisions. Indeed, as the voting progressed, the emotional tenor of the room intensified. To our surprise, the children voted to refuse this payment, determining that the demand should be resisted.

Throughout this dramatic segment, strong commitment to the drama was evident, whilst a genuine sense of connection, based on the children's personal experiences of the moral dilemmas around reward and punishment in response to good and bad behaviour, appeared to combine to engender emotional responses that were deeply felt. Within the fiction, these responses seemed to include outrage, sympathy, concern, compassion and ultimately relief, whilst the drama itself and the children's obvious enjoyment of it, produced quite different and once again highly varied emotions. We saw indications of amusement, delight, satisfaction, enthrallment and pride once the vote was determined, with these 'out of frame'

emotions being underpinned by a simultaneous awareness of the fictional world and the world of their own life experience. Here then the children were angered in the play as they simultaneously reveled in their roles [to paraphrase Vygotsky's (1976, p. 549) famous notion that 'the child weeps in play as a patient, but revels as a player'].

Quadrant C



Figure 4. Quadrant C

Across our discussions, we have been using the bottom left hand quadrant (see Figure 4) to examine participation, which at its extremes, is characterised by very weak or non-existent connection, together with low-level commitment that is limited by either defensiveness or disinterest. Here the emotions evident are most likely to be boredom, frustration or confusion. Paradoxically then, this is perhaps the most critical quadrant for drama educators, since participants who respond in this way across multiple frames of any given drama will soon become disengaged, disinterested or even hostile, with behaviours to match.

In sorting through our reflections on the three dramas in focus, we fortunately recalled very few examples of this type of participation, but within the Rollo drama one emerged. The participant was a student from a neighboring class who, at the classroom teacher's request, joined the drama for this one session. As such, and not unreasonably, she had no sense of connection to the work or to us. In addition, it is unlikely that she had any previous experience of participatory drama, and therefore showed no commitment to the form either. Fortunately, her English language levels were more advanced than those of the other children in the group, so that she was able to comprehend at a higher level, the situations we were exploring.

The outward manifestation of her lack of commitment was a refusal to work with the other children and a reluctance to respond to teacher requests. To encourage her participation, Penny used her low status role as Rollo to invite this child into the work by seeking her help. These efforts were rewarded with fleeting moments of eye contact and what appeared to be reluctant involvement. However, the combination of weak connection and low or non-existent commitment failed to generate any sustained emotional responses related to the fictional world of the drama. By contrast, we recognized in this child's responses some real emotional undertones that appeared to relate to issues well beyond and outside of our work.

Quadrant D



Figure 5. Quadrant D

The final quadrant, appearing at the bottom right hand corner of the grid (Figure 5), has emerged across our discussions as being perhaps the most interesting of all and is possibly the one, along with quadrant A, that most keenly informed the design of this framework. It relates to participation in any given moment that is characterized by low commitment but strong connection.

As we have seen within the discussion relating to quadrant C, a lack of commitment might be caused by several factors including inexperience, tentativeness or outright hostility towards the form. It may also be influenced by the specific dynamics of relationships within the group and with the facilitator. Within this quadrant, an individual may also make a conscious or unconscious choice to withdraw their usually high commitment in order to protect themselves from a dramatic focus, set of ideas or role position that is generating too strong a connection. At these times, the participant may be afraid of the emotional fallout the drama work might

generate. Alternatively, individuals may be enjoying their strong sense of connection, but decisions made by the facilitator or other group members might negatively impact on their commitment levels. For example, a shift in strategy, an unexpected and unwelcome plot development (offered by either the facilitator or a fellow participant), or the behavior (in or out of role) of another group member might all be responsible for this sudden lowering of commitment.

Once again, we turn to our three dramas to identify relevant instances of this type of participation and to examine its impact on the emotions generated. Madonna and Julie immediately identified an example from their work within the early childhood *Little People* drama. As we have seen above, the children participating in this drama work had made strong connections to the roles and situations being explored, but in spite of this, immediately lost commitment as the result of a facilitation decision, where their ideas were over-ruled. The factors informing this decision and the specific outcomes arising from it are too complex to examine here, however what is worthy of discussion is the fact that in spite of the children's apparently strong connection to the characters and their situation, this sudden loss of commitment to the drama had an immediate impact on the emotions generated, with these emotions shifting from those that were directly related to the dramatic context, to emotions best described as being connected to the actual one. These emotions and other responses ranged from frustration with the facilitator's decision through to boredom and disinterest as the drama temporarily shifted into topics and approaches of little interest to the children.

A further example of participation relating to Quadrant D has already been discussed above, and relates once again to the *Streetcar* drama. Here participants who experienced an extremely strong and in some cases personal connection to the roles and situations being explored in this drama, opted to intentionally lower their commitment levels in order to distance themselves from the drama. Through this self-initiated protection device, these individuals were able to regulate their emotional response to the work. By choosing to disengage from the action, these participants, whilst still closely connecting to its symbolism, roles and/or the situations being played out, had lowered their commitment to the work and thus avoided the possibility of generating a powerful emotional response.

Conclusion

Although we have put this framework down into written form, our process of dialogue, exploration and reflection continues. In particular, we wonder about the framework's authenticity and applicability beyond our own experiences. We also wonder what will happen when we put this framework to the test by inviting our participants, both past and present, to explicitly consider their emotional responses and to share with us their thoughts about the relationship, if any, between these responses, their commitment to the work and any

connections they have made in and beyond the drama. Their reflections may cause us to reconsider our framework, or might lead us to include further features of participation that we have currently excluded. To this end, we have already commenced work on a survey tool designed to gather this kind of information and are collecting additional data from participants in our drama work across a range of contexts.

For now however, we are happy to use this framework as a useful vehicle to support both our emerging understanding and our practice. In particular, we have noted that we are now far more aware within our planning processes of the likely connections we might create, and keen to look for additional ways to avoid extended periods of strong connection. We have also recognized those times when poor facilitation skills have resulted in a drop in commitment, with the outcome being the generation of emotional responses that are more related to dissatisfaction with the drama experience than those that usefully support meanings made within it.

For these reasons we are pleased to have commenced our journey through these challenging waters towards an understanding of emotion in participatory drama. Indeed, we are greatly enjoying ongoing engagement in rich conversations where we continue to question our own and each other's perceptions and comfortable conclusions. As facilitators who draw continuously on the power of drama as an educative and social force, provoking emotions of all kinds and at various levels of intensity, we believe that this continued exploration is critical.

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