

**THE IN-PROCESS COLLECTIVE
AS A FORM OF INQUIRY
THROUGH PERFORMANCE**

SHIRLEY R. STEINBERG

B. Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1986

**A One-Credit Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of The University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree**

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

April, 1990

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Rationale and Explanation of Project

The concept of a theatre collective originated about twenty years ago in Quebec as a form of social theatre. The medium included a group of actors improvising and then scripting scenes that pertained to certain topics chosen for performance. Noted collectives include ones produced on William Lyon McKenzie King and "The Farm Show", both dealing with social and political issues in Canada. The performances were scripted and the collectives, now published, remain basically the same each time they are produced.

The idea of a collective intrigued me, consequently I decided to apply the concept with students and to create a collection of personally written material with dialogue and improvisation to produce a performance. After several collectives on gender and giftedness, I realized that the medium was not restricted to any topic, and that the collective would be an excellent method of democratic teaching within the regular classroom with regular classroom curricula.

For my one-credit project, I decided to facilitate the production of a collective within a Grade Nine Social Studies class that I was teaching. I wanted to employ the ideas presented within feminist pedagogy, that of allowing empowerment to take place and to become a "midwife" to the students instead of the teacher-director

expected in many productions. Including the concepts that Freire discusses in his ideas of students being able to name their world and have a concept of place and understanding of the world through their own experience, I developed a model of presenting the drama collective.

The collective began with dialogue within the classroom to discover what the students were interested in. We viewed a tape of a collective and discussed the value of the medium. At that time I proposed the idea for the project and the students voted unanimously to go ahead with it. We set up a timeline for the production and decided to do it on "Communism". After a week of dialogue about our perceptions of communism, the students decided that the subject was too narrow and that they were intrigued with the prejudice they were experiencing within themselves about the "Reds". They voted to change the collective to include prejudice in general.

The project lasted two months. We spent about two hours a week talking about prejudice. We brainstormed words that dealt with prejudice and then categorized the words and discussed each category. Several times the students wrote down their feelings about the project and its progress.

After much dialogue, we began to improvise scenes surrounding our discussions and trying to reenact personal

situations and show how we felt or thought. The project progressed, and at the end of the second month, we presented it to an audience. After the performance, the audience joined in a discussion on the collective and on prejudice, thus becoming an existential part of the entire process. Nothing was scripted, and the dialogue that took place during the performance was spontaneous, consequently, I assert that the entire project was phenomenological as an "is-ness" or what it is like to discuss prejudice, and what prejudice is like. If it was ever presented again, it would change and develop, hence the idea of being ever in-process.

The students were super, I think I learned the most, and several times I was reminded that I was an equal partner and my agenda as teacher was not going to be accepted. The students learned who they were and what they thought and as a group decided that no matter what their own prejudices may remain, that they were responsible for these thoughts and owned the feelings.

Student Comments During Project

During the project, students often discussed their feelings about what they were learning. With their permission, I have included two entries about the project and prejudice. The first entry was done at the beginning of the project and students were asked what they felt was at the root of their prejudices. The second inclusion was done at the end of the project and students were asked to write about how they felt about the entire collective.

Tracy

Most of the stuff we said are true but some of it was kind of rude. I really feel bad about all of this. I'm not always as open as I was today, I didn't mean everything I said. I don't care too much for them, but I would never put them down. Well, maybe would. I feel that we were try to fill up the board, not discriminating them.

Buzamond
February 5

I truly hate prejudices against people cuz I would and do hate it when I hear prejudices against me. I feel they're judging all Indians by just a few or some Indians. I think some Indians are cleaner, dressed better, etc. than some white people. Some white people are dirtier hockey players than the Indians. I just think Indians are probably caught more than whites because referees watch them cuz they expect them to be dirty. Same with police. They figure an Indian is more likely to steal than a white. Sometimes I feel nervous or scared around Indian because I hear people say that I should be afraid of them. I feel we should be able to judge them ourselves but prejudices don't really and completely ~~don't~~ allow us to do so. I don't really like to talk about ~~people~~ Indians like how we were in class. I thought some of the things said about Indians were rude. I don't know how people who have had prejudices against themselves and hate it can turn around and talk about other people the same way as people has talked about them.

Elaine

I think a lot ^{or maybe all} of this is stereotyping, many of these events or features etc I have noticed with Indians. But I know not everyone of them is like this.

I think a lot of the troubles with Indians is because of the government. The government has given them way to much money and rights and has let most of the natives go the way they want to.

The Indians were here first & deserved some extra rights because we took their land away but they have proven that overall they were not able to be responsible and should get a lot of the rights taken away. They should get stricter and try to ~~make~~ ^{make} them into responsible people. Indians are not the only bad people, whites ~~also~~ also do crimes a murder.

~~It is~~ I think the Indians used to be better people, because if you think back on their traditions etc. The white learned a lot from them, but when the white came & gave to many rights and the ^{some} Indians got worse.

Denise

Feb. 5/90
Monday

I feel real bad, but I'm an Indian. I don't think it's fair. I would hate if the Indians were to be talking about whites. I like the Indians. I don't like them all but that's because of all the Indians. Indians are like us, but we have different customs. I hate the Indian jokes, they are racist. How would you like it if people made up disgusting jokes about us? Some Indians are like that but then so are whites, so what's the big deal?

Jennifer

I think that this has been a very interesting subject to talk about. But I still really ~~don't~~ think that there that bad. I think just because there dark and rough that there bad people when some of them aren't all that bad. Once last summer we went to Fairmount for summer and we went horseback riding and it was Indians that ran the place. I didn't think that there all that bad as people say they are. Some Indians are nice others can be mean.

Maybe people think there bad cause there rich and got everything they want and Indians aren't all that rich cause they usually have large families cause you hardly see a small family Indian people might think there rough because there always getting pick on by the whites so they get rough and take no stuff that no decent.

Most of the Indians get drunk on lysol cans because they need alcohol, ~~and they need~~ and they sit in bars and get drunk. Well what else are they suppose to do if there not working, some of them come in the store and ask if anyone looking for a hired hand.

~~that~~

Chris R

Today we have brainstormed many words that come to our minds when the term "Indians" comes up. I think that there are true about a lot of Indians. But I met an Indian boy, many years ago. At first when I saw him I thought oh no, that's all we need in our ~~own~~ neighborhood. another "Indian". Living in Lethbridge I do see a lot of Indians around the city that ~~are~~ can be put under many of these words. But that Indian kid was one of the nicest ~~of~~ kids I ever met. He was very honest, clean, and had a good family. I think sometimes that what causes a lot of problems for Indians is their families. ~~Either way~~ ~~either way~~ Most families don't set ~~a~~ a good example. But when I see how ~~to~~ this one boy's family was, and how nice they were that does say some things ~~of~~ about how the kids will turn out. Sometimes our bad feelings about Indians extend to all of them, even the good ones.

My Parent's ^{My Parent's} tell us that internet
eventually are going to take over our
whole community like they all been
in other parents of the countries
That's why I don't let some of
the internet. They are risk but they go to

Community doesn't like Hitlerites

Most people hate inclusions

Black people are athletes most people say
because they've seen and everyone's seen many
good athletes

Hitlerites may all see and hear
everything

mechanics are cheap in most things and
the few who are not steal

Dutch usually are hired men because
most who are not are hired men Dutch
are crazy slavers

The influences in my life that had directly influenced my opinions of prejudice because I met some Heideclausis and ~~the~~ ~~to~~ whom I talked to them. I really got to like them and realized they were more like me than I thought. I don't have any reason for hating Indians cuz they haven't done anything to me. My dad is prejudice against them but I don't agree with him.

Influence

Mostly ~~the~~ ~~my~~ parents ~~to~~ and also
the community.

~~My~~ Huttrics moved right beside us.

They always swim by our house.

They skate uptown without paying.

Some influences that I have ~~had~~ had in my life that I'm prejudiced against people like Hitlerites are because 1 time they told us my uncle ~~had~~ had ordered chickens for us so that we would buy them but he never ordered any.

Another time mom was working in the field when some Hitlerites came to the field and asked mom to buy some chickens but she said she had no time but they persuaded her so she went home ~~to get~~ so she could pay. They asked her for some coffee but she said she had no time. They said "sure you do it won't take long"

"No I don't have time" replied mom

"Oh yes you do" they said
finally mom gave in.

~~They~~ they gave people down.

Chris

- My feelings about it ~~were~~ that it was a good way of teaching, I also felt that it would help me learn more, + faster. I really felt the project would work.

- Some of the things that I have questions about is how will a person in the audience react, or feel if we do a skit, or talk about ~~to~~ something that relates to their particular ethnic background.

- during the project I felt that it was coming along extremely well, and I felt that I was learning more about ~~and~~ prejudice, and what causes it.

- ~~I~~ was really impressed with this project and how it turned out. I really feel we have come a long way.

Paragraph

At first I was sort of excited about the whole thing, but it started to become a drag. That's all we would do is practice and practice. The most important thing that I learned was how to work as a whole class. I figure it would be difficult to perform this with a much larger class.

Tracy

Questions -

Who is this benefiting, use or the teacher?

Are you doing this for a project mark or is for use?

What happens if there is ethnic people in the audience?

TRACY

My first feelings about it was ~~it~~ I really wasn't interested in it.
But then when I got into it I was really enjoying it. Some
things I really didn't think were prejudice but when we
did a skit I made. Questions: What happens if they don't like,
what if there people in audience that were doing a skit on,
what if they think it too cruel. During it I was thinking
it was going to be too much. But I was learning a lot of things
about Prejudice. Some things I really can't why people are
Prejudice? Now, it getting to be boring cause of practicing
it 4 or 5 times a day.

Jennifer

Suzanne

My first feelings of this new way of teaching was excited, I thought it would be alot more interesting than reading some boring story that you don't really read and do some boring questions on it later. You don't even remember what you've read a few weeks later. I can't wait till we get to the University and start to perform.

Questions:

- What if ~~there~~ there is an Indian there?
- Are we going to learn anything?
- How many people are going to be there?

My first feeling's about this new way of teaching was weird. I didn't think you could learn very much from it. I thought it would be boring and uninteresting. When we started this new way of teaching it was interesting. I enjoyed ~~not~~ learning this way. It's easier for me to learn this way than just taking notes and getting lectures. This way you get to know all the student's feelings.

Who is this benefiting most the teacher?

What happens if there's an Indian or another ethnic group there?

Tom
Harry

Elaine

I like the idea of teaching some things like this
but as long as it doesn't drag on too long.
Because now we've been doing it for a month
and it's starting to get boring.

Some thing that we learned through this
prejudice collection is that we use a lot of
prejudice and we don't know about such as
Jews, Gypsies, etc.

Some questions I have are:

- Well this offend anybody in the ground?
- Do people (Jews) take this prejudice seriously?

Jodie Johnson

My first feelings about it were I
was excited about it and thought
it would really be interesting
what happens if there's a person
who's in the audience that one of
our prejudices shits eyes against?

Will it do good

will it embarrass myself

Do we get marked on it

Do we have to do it

getting kind of boring

but that because we

keep doing it over and over.

Jodie

Overhead Brainstorm Chart on Natives

This chart is a sample of charts we brainstormed during the project. We would record all words that came to mind about the subject. This chart was done from words that were called out about Natives.

GOAT... RESPONSIBILITIES Families

STUPID AFTER IOT THINK AND
GAMES STUPID NAMES

CHINESE
FAMILY LIVES
LARGE FAMILIES

ATTITUDE

ATTITUDES

PROFITABILITY
WRECKED HOUSES
DAILY MATH
NO SUBMITTING
SLEEPY
DIRTY MATHS
BARS
DRINKS
CUSTOMERS

RESERVES

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

SLANG & NAMES

LAW

DRUGS CONTINITY

PLACES
PACIFIC ISLANDS
PACIFIC ISLANDS
PACIFIC ISLANDS

DRUG GLASSES

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

EVENTS & TRADITIONS
butter
tee-pee
foot-aid

DRINKS
WALL-BIG
NO SHOWING
GAVE
BARS
MIDDLE CLASS
STINK
TAIL

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

SPRAY
STOMP

Description of Scenes

HOCKEY SCENE: This scene was developed when we discussed prejudices about natives. The boys were very verbal about the fact that they believed Natives were unfair in hockey. During our discussions it was revealed that white students were equally unfair a great deal of the time.

TEACHER SCENE: As we developed scenes, I had an agenda to keep to the topic of religious or ethnic prejudice. However, the boys felt that they were victims of prejudice by female teachers. On a day that I was absent, the students composed this scene. It was an excellent reminder of the democratic process!

DUTCH SCENE: Elaine expressed her own experiences as a newcomer to the area, a child of parents born in Holland. This scene was constructed as she related her story.

PLAYGROUND SCENE: Students were used to buying "Nigger Babies" from the store; it wasn't until we started our dialogues that it came apparent that the name was not appropriate. This scene stemmed a lot of talking about what exactly is in a title or name.

HUTTERITE SCENE: As farmers, the students in the area are acutely aware of the new Hutterite colony that has just been built. Their discussions of Hutterites were heated and defensive many times and the result was a knowledge that they, indeed were prejudiced, but that they felt it was justified.

STORE SCENE: This scene was a result of the discussion that crime and stealing from stores was led by Natives. The perceptions of the students were from hearsay and news reports, never from first-hand experience.

Elementary School

A collective of what we
know and believe and think about
Prejudice

~~name~~
#6

Chris R. ...
Lange

#8

Tracy
#11
Dunne

Denise
Howe #9

Shirley Starberg

Suzanne
Vioslik
#3

Dear Grade Nine Parent,

Our Social Studies Class is studying the topic: The U.S.S.R. this year as a requirement within the Alberta Curriculum for Grade Nine Social Studies. As part of our unit, we are doing a dramatic presentation entitled: "Communism". The students are writing and researching this topic themselves, and our production will be co-authored by each student, in other words, they are writing the entire play themselves.


The play will be finished in January, and we are hoping to present it to any interested parents and friends. In addition, we are planning to present the play at the University of Lethbridge to several teachers.

During the process of creating the play, I would like to record some of our classes on video tape, as well as on a tape recorder. In addition, I will be keeping a journal of the progress we are making. I would like permission from you to keep these records of our play, and invite you to visit us at any time to view the records or watch our rehearsals.

Along with working within the curriculum, I feel that this method of drama works well in allowing the students to research and develop their own ideas and to become critical thinkers. I am using work within this framework towards the completion of my Master's Degree at the University of Lethbridge. What we generate during this Grade Nine class will assist other teachers in developing new ways to teach Social Studies, and it is exciting that our Enchant Grade Nines will be able to take part in this.

I would appreciate any comments or questions that you have in regard to this manner, and request that you indicate your permission on this paper and return it to the school.

Thank you,



Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

Tracy has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

Judy Dunsmore (parent or guardian)

Nov 22/89 date

Dear Grade Nine Parent,

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Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

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_____ (parent or guardian)

_____ date

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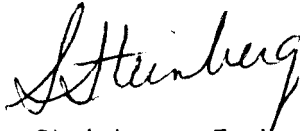
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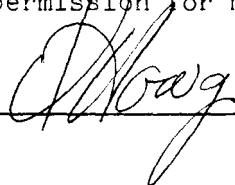
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Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies


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_____ (parent or guardian)

_____ date

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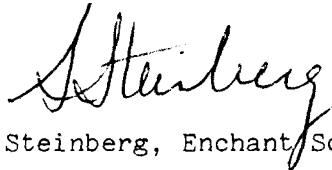
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Thank you,



Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

Suzanne Virostek has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

Mrs. Linda G. Virostek (parent or guardian)

Nov 21/89 date

Dear Grade Nine Parent,

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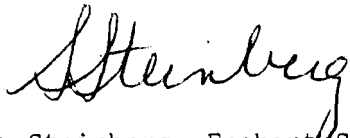
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Thank you,



Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

Elaine has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

Mary Ann Steinberg (parent or guardian)

Nov. 20, 1989 date

Dear Grade Nine Parent,

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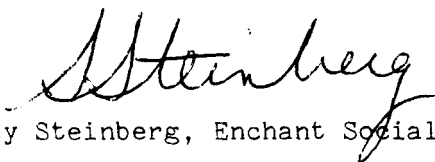
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Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

 C. J. Jodie has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

 Le Langeman (parent or guardian)

 Nov 20/89 date

Dear Grade Nine Parent,

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Thank you,



Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

Jennifer has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

Brenda Swanson (parent or guardian)

Nov. 21/89 date

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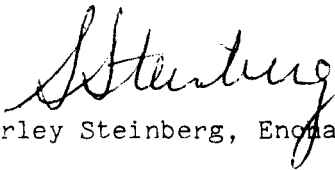
The play will be finished in January, and we are hoping to present it to any interested parents and friends. In addition, we are planning to present the play at the University of Lethbridge to several teachers.

During the process of creating the play, I would like to record some of our classes on video tape, as well as on a tape recorder. In addition, I will be keeping a journal of the progress we are making. I would like permission from you to keep these records of our play, and invite you to visit us at any time to view the records or watch our rehearsals.

Along with working within the curriculum, I feel that this method of drama works well in allowing the students to research and develop their own ideas and to become critical thinkers. I am using work within this framework towards the completion of my Master's Degree at the University of Lethbridge. What we generate during this Grade Nine class will assist other teachers in developing new ways to teach Social Studies, and it is exciting that our Enchant Grade Nines will be able to take part in this.

I would appreciate any comments or questions that you have in regard to this manner, and request that you indicate your permission on this paper and return it to the school.

Thank you,



Shirley Steinberg, Enchant Social Studies

Chris has my permission to participate in the dramatic presentation for Grade Nine Social Studies. I also give my permission for my child to be video-taped.

B. Rutledge (parent or guardian)

NOV 20/89 date

What'll I do when he goes to Hollywood??

Sources

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