

**DRAMA AND
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:
A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN**

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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(Signed)_____

Date: / /

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the use of drama as a teaching tool in religious education within the context of sacramental preparation. The research is informed by educational theories which suggest that arts education and religious education both rely on aesthetic knowing to construct meaning. The theories which underpin this research claim that this form of knowing honours the students' freedom to form their own understandings and will be achieved through critical reflection and experiential methods which engage heart, spirit and mind. Drama is one such method and therefore this thesis contends that drama and religious education are indeed 'a match made in heaven'.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the beginning

Introduction

In the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the preparation of children who wish to celebrate the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion as the completion of their initiation into the Catholic Church, takes place primarily in the parish and family context. The Catholic school supports this preparation with classroom teaching in Religious Education based on the Brisbane Catholic Education module *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* (2003). These modules advocate an educational approach to teaching and learning which favours cognitive understanding and does not require a faith response from students. The children generally present for sacramental preparation from seven years of age, which places them in Year Three of their primary schooling.

The concern of this thesis is that current sacramental preparation does not appear to offer the children the opportunity to develop clear cognitive understandings of the concepts involved nor engage them affectively in the preparation or even, perhaps the celebration of the sacraments. It suggests that more effective methods of teaching religion may be found within The Arts, in particular, educational drama.

Religious Education

Church history is rich with examples of the arts enhancing religious knowing and religious celebration. From the beginning of the Early Church through to the Middle

Ages and beyond, people interacted with images, music, ritual, word, symbol and drama as they learnt about and celebrated the Christian story. The Reformation saw a shift away from these affective modes of learning and more cognitive methods became popular in celebrating and exploring religion in an educational context. With the development of the printing press and catechisms during this period, learning in religion came to be dependant upon the written word rather than interaction with the arts. Memorisation became the primary source of acquiring knowledge. It was thought that the learning of facts would lead to the desired aim of this catechetical style of religious education: growth in faith.

Memorisation as a method of learning and teaching was common in all subjects and continued until the twentieth century when educational theorists, including Dewey (1934), were advocating more experiential strategies. Models of religious education reflected these new theories by incorporating activities which engaged the children more effectively while remaining catechetical and demanding a faith response from them.

Significantly, advances in theories of knowing, particularly through the work of the 'critical theorists' in the 1970s guided education to a new level. Habermas (in Lovat, 2002), who was prominent in this group, suggested that critical or self-reflective knowing was concerned with the students' freedom to form their own understandings. This freedom in learning was in sharp contrast to the doctrinal methods previously employed and contributed to a major shift in educational practice impacting on both drama and religious education.

As society and consequently classrooms became more pluralistic, educationalists demanded that catechetical approaches in religious education be replaced by practices which promoted religious freedom through an academic study of religion. Curriculum designers in the field embraced this concept and developed syllabi in which “the primary focus of the classroom teaching of religion is educational” (Barry & Brennan, 1997a, p. 12) and a faith response is not actively sought.

Aesthetic Education

In the second half of the century, Dorothy Heathcote was pioneering the use of drama as a learning medium in other areas. Her approach also advocated freedom of learning through critical reflection and aesthetic experiences. Later, practitioners such as O'Neill (1995) and McLean (1996) built on her work and developed theories and practices which privileged the aesthetic in educational drama.

Aesthetic knowing became accepted as a valid method of constructing meaning and was also embraced by religious educators. They called for methods which put an end to the dichotomy between the affective and rational modes of learning, preferring an holistic way of knowing which is steeped in tradition and experience (Groome, 1998; Grimmitt, 2000). Watts and Williams (1988) recognise that religious knowing is a cognitive task that demands emotional involvement with neither activity being ignored.

Religious knowing is further enhanced by the development of a ‘religious’ or ‘sacramental imagination’. Maria Harris (1987) believes that when viewed through the lens of sacramental imagination, all things are capable of being sacrament. That is, they

reveal the presence of God, the gracious, the holy, the divine (p. 22). She describes religious imagination as being involved with ‘what is of ultimate concern and meaning’ (Harris, 1987, p. 12).

Greene (1999) agrees and suggests that the search for meaning in life may be addressed through the arts. She claims that “the idea of aesthetic education is to arouse people ... to engage” in decision making about issues central to life within the areas of morals, ethics, values and spirituality (p. 17). Drama educators agree (Heathcote in Wagner, 1990; Haseman 1999; Donelan 2002) that opportunities to explore the basic and vital relationship between Self and Other should be made explicit in drama education.

Liddy (2002) insists “a fundamental responsibility of the classroom religious education curriculum should be to nurture the spiritual life of each one of these children” (p. 13). Tacey (2003) concurs and calls upon religious educators to be spiritual educators. He declares that a vibrant religious imagination is a pre-requisite for discovering and nurturing spirituality and that this is essential before religious knowing is possible.

Grajczonek (2001) proposes that it is not relevant for children who have no experience of the rites and rituals of the Catholic Church to be introduced to them without some preliminary conceptual work which is experiential and imaginative. Grimmit (2000) agrees, suggesting knowledge cannot be constructed if there is no prior experience of the religious concept under investigation. One method of experiential learning in religious education advocated by Grajczonek is process drama.

As the name suggests, process drama is about the process of creating drama rather than the performance. According to O'Neill (1995), participation in process drama invites entry to a 'drama world' where aesthetic experience is possible. O'Neill states that the aesthetic experience is encouraged by attention to the art form and many dramatic forms are employed in process drama. "These forms include role taking and role building, the 'key strategy' of teacher in role, the means of being inside and outside the action, and distance and reflection" (O'Neill, 1995, p. xviii).

Integration of the Arts and Religious Education

Along with Grajczonek, the call for the integration of arts and religion has come from many quarters (Harris, 1987; Lee 1995; Groome, 1998; John Paul II, 1999; Fleischer, 2000; Osmer, 2000; Goldberg, 2001; Bathersby, 2005). Brown (1975) suggests "the close logical links between the realms of aesthetics and religion demand that these be complementary studies" (p. 146). de Souza (2005) proposes that religious education programmes employ strategies which "balance cognitive and affective learning" so that both the inner and outer lives of the student are addressed (p. 66).

Those involved in aesthetic education also believe that we live simultaneously in two worlds: an inner world and an outer world (Hughes, 1989, Abbs, 1989) and that it is imperative that we attend to both. Hughes suggests that it is the imagination which embraces both worlds (p. 171) and training in it through aesthetic education is essential.

The teacher has a pivotal role in both religious and drama education. In educational drama, the teacher is responsible for making the aesthetic explicit (McLean, 1996) and

similarly the religious educator directs the children to the spiritual (de Souza, 2004). In both cases the teacher relies on critical reflection on the part of the student to construct meaning from the experience.

While there are those who favour a more rational approach to Religious Education which is not faith-dependent (Smart, 1991; Crawford & Rossiter, 1985), others such as Groome (1998), Greeley (2000), Liddy (2002) and de Souza (2005), recognise that opportunities for spiritual and faith development are an important part of any Religious Education programme.

The particular subset of Religious Education which is relevant to this discussion is that of sacramental preparation within the Catholic school. While recognising the plurality which exists in these classrooms and the consequent difficulties associated with enfaithment (Lovat, 1989), it is nevertheless vital to offer opportunities for the development of the sacramental imagination which may lead to an exploration of personal spirituality and a deepening of faith in the students. Without this opportunity, both effective sacramental preparation and religious freedom is compromised. Therefore the aim of this research is to investigate the use of educational drama as a teaching tool in school-based religious education within the context of sacramental preparation.

Summary

Chapter Two provides an overview of literature in the fields of religious education, aesthetic education and the points at which the two connect. Chapter Three explores the research design and the process employed with attention to the context and the

participants. It describes the collection and analysis of data in a case study which employs ethnographic techniques. Chapter Four presents the analysis of the case study journey in a narrative style, honouring the voices of the participants. Chapter Five discusses and develops the results of the analysis in light of the aim as stated above. Attention is drawn to findings and recommendations which might be relevant to religious educators who are involved in sacramental preparation. Suggestions will be offered for the direction of future studies.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Let there be light

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the historical association of the Roman Catholic Church and the Arts, with particular emphasis on its enhancement of religious knowing. The specific area of the Arts which is relevant is educational drama and its use as a teaching method in sacramental preparation as a part of religious education.

Additionally, by discussing contemporary theories of ‘ways of knowing’ which honour both the cognitive and affective in the process, the efficacy of using drama as a tool in religious education will be investigated. The enquiry begins with a brief history of Catholic religious education and its relationship with the Arts.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Jewish Tradition

The Christian Tradition has a rich history of incorporating the Arts into rituals, celebrations and education. The Hebrew Bible abounds with examples. On the banks of the Red Sea, the Israelites led by Miriam and Moses celebrated their freedom by singing, dancing and playing tambourines (Exodus 15:1-21). King David assembled an orchestra numbering 288 which consisted of harps, lyres, cymbals and singers (1 Chronicles 25:1-8). The temple built by Solomon was decorated with gold, jewels, sculptures and “fine

linen with cherubim worked into it” (2 Chronicles 3:3-14). When the prophet Ezekiel is struck mute by God (Ezekiel 3:26), he mimed God’s message. The poetry of the Psalms, the imagery of Isaiah and the stirring narrative of Exodus are indicative of the artistry of those who wrote these books. Jesus too, employed the art of storytelling as he used parables to teach his followers. He and these other storytellers did so in such a way that they spoke to both the cognitive and affective within the hearer.

Early Christian Church

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved (Acts 2: 42, 44, 46-7).

Hill (1995) claims that based on the derivation of the word ‘church’ from its Greek and Hebrew roots, “the church is a gathering of people who belong to God” (p. 194). Furthermore, he explains that the communities of this fledgling church were “bonded to Christ and to one another. The community was noted for its lifestyle of loving and sharing with one another” (p. 210). Because these early Christians brought with them the wealth of their Jewish past, religious education followed the same path as it had for centuries, relying on memorising stories and prayers and participating in ritual (Treston,

1993, p. 23). Religious education and celebration were steeped in the artistry of the Hebrew biblical texts.

Eventually, as the number of Gentiles wanting to become Christians increased, religious education became more connected to conversion and, according to Turner still included an affective dimension. “The good news of the resurrection turned the hearts of many to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Baptism ritualised their conversion and Eucharist celebrated their belief” (Turner, 2000, p. 1). In the first century, Baptisms took place after short periods of preparation within the community, which involved preaching the Good News and instruction on living a Christian life which was centred on fellowship, care for the poor and worship (Treston, 1993, p. 23).

Along with the process of preparation and initiation, a new art developed early in the history of the Christian Church. Followers sought to express their faith, beliefs, customs and rituals through paintings, sculptures and engravings. Commonly, fish and shepherds were among the representations of Jesus. These symbols as well as prayers and stories from the life of Jesus, were depicted on the walls of worship spaces and burial sites.

Initially, the sacraments of initiation, Baptism and Eucharist, were based on actions of Jesus to welcome members into a new community of believers. Around the Second Century, the catechumenate, as a process of catechesis, was introduced as a journey towards Baptism. Because of the threat of persecution after Emperor Septimus Severus (193-211) forbade conversion to Christianity or Judaism (Martos, 1989), a community would sponsor a catechumen and ensure their fidelity to the teachings and the people. As

well as cognitive instruction, the catechumen received more affective formation by being involved in praying, sharing and celebrating. “A person’s coming to faith – or conversion to Christianity – was looked upon as a community responsibility and demanded total community involvement” (DeGidio, 1991, p. 24).

In 313CE Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In fact it “ became a fashionable rather than a persecuted religion” (DeGidio, 1991, p. 24). Religious education was not important to many of the new converts because becoming a Christian was often seen as merely a rung on the social ladder of the day, leading to acceptance in the Roman Empire. Christians were free to worship publicly and built artistically beautiful churches and basilicas filled with exquisite paintings and sculptures, in which the celebrations took place. In 321ce Constantine decreed Sunday a day of rest, so that there was plenty of time for elaborate liturgies presided over by the bishop. What had begun as intimate ‘table fellowship’ in house churches, had now become “a state function as well as a religious ritual” (Martos, 1991, p. 216).

Many devout Christians were unhappy with the lack of religious education and as “small groups of Christians fled to the hills to follow Jesus” (Treston, 1993, p. 24) the monastic tradition was born. One of the most influential teachers to come out of this tradition was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (b. 354), whose writing on catechesis “looms large over the story of Christian education, even to the present day” (Ryan, 1997, p. 7). Augustine not only provided guidance on what to teach but also how to teach it. Augustine developed Christian doctrine which was taught through lectures or sermons and concentrated on the

cognitive rather than the affective. The emphasis here was on an intellectual understanding of Christianity which Augustine believed would lead to conversion.

Infant baptisms became the norm at this time, due in no small way to Augustine's teachings on original sin, whereby all people were born in sin and needed to be forgiven through Baptism before they could share in eternal life. Even infants received Communion at Baptism and an independent rite of Confirmation was developed.

Middle Ages

The Middle Ages saw art reclaim a central role in catechesis. Most people in the Middle Ages were unable to read and so religious education took place primarily through the stories told in stained glass windows, drama, poetry, icons, sermons and music. Great abbeys and cathedrals were built, which were works of art in themselves and provided a space for worship. The Mystery and Miracle plays of this era were a significant source of religious education and entertainment especially at Christmas and Easter. Pope Gregory the Great (590 - 604) who is credited with Gregorian chant, "like many of his contemporaries, was not so much concerned with scholarship and the intellectual aspects of belief. His interests were more aesthetic and practical; music and liturgy could nurture Christian faith more effectively than instruction in Christian doctrines" (Ryan, 1997, p. 9). These ordinary people did not attend schools and the impact of this aesthetic form of education is reflected in the deep religiousness of the people. During the Middle Ages, religion was deeply entrenched in everyday life.

Thomas Aquinas was a leader in education in the Middle Ages. “However, his writings stressed the rational and cognitive” (Treston, 1993, p. 24) and so acceptance of doctrines continued to be paramount in formal religious education. Aquinas claimed that the beliefs of Christianity could be proved through human reason. As his philosophies became more accepted within the church this “rise of rational, scholastic thought led to a decline of popular devotions and pious practices in many areas” (Ryan, 1997, p. 12). Once again, the aesthetic gave way to the cognitive in religious education and celebration.

The Renaissance saw a ‘rebirth’ in religious art. The genius of Michelangelo, Raphael and Palestrina enhanced celebrations and worship spaces through their aesthetic qualities. Great art was closely associated with and sponsored by the Church. Conversely, the Reformation of the sixteenth century had a dynamic impact on religious education and the role of the Arts within it.

Reformation

The actions of Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) and the consequent Council of Trent (1545 - 1563) which was convened in response to his claims, had the most significant effect on the Church to date. Luther’s main argument with the official Church was a “philosophical difference over the individual’s right to decide what to believe” (Martos, 1991, p. 83). Luther believed that each Christian needed to develop a personal faith formed through education and a free conscience rather than unquestioningly adhere to Church teaching. “Education for Luther then was closely connected to religion and to the reformation of the church” (Elias, 1995, p. 108).

Luther's educational reform consisted of increasing the number of schools, which he insisted were funded and controlled by the State and provided secular and religious education to the students. Luther produced a Protestant catechism which formed the basis of religious education in the schools. In response, and at the decree of the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church set up its own education system and produced a Catholic catechism. "The reformation catechisms shifted the accent of narrative, scripture and Christian living, which characterised early church instructional writings, to concise summaries of church doctrines" (Treston, 1993, p. 25) which were learnt by rote. The more affective modes of learning were diminishing in favour of cognitive models.

The reformers, including Calvin and Zwingli who joined Luther in his attempted reform were also concerned that the sacraments had lost their meaning and had become empty rituals. Luther suggested that only two sacraments were needed: Baptism and Eucharist. The Church was stoic in its own defence. "If the reformers tried to revise the sacraments, the Council of Trent sought to restore them" (Martos, 1991, p. 88). In fact over half of the Council's doctrinal decrees concerned the sacraments, which it numbered at seven, as is still the case today.

In contrast to Luther's ideal of personal faith formed through a free conscience, "Tridentine Catholicism (the style of church life patterned by the council of Trent) was a model of unquestioned authority and disciplined obedience" (Martos, 1989, p. 32). This Council sought uniformity in a church that was spreading as far as Africa, Asia and the Americas. This homogeneity also reached across the centuries. "The Catholic Mass in 1960 was almost identical, word for word and gesture for gesture, with the Roman Mass of

1570” (Martos, 1991, p. 250). Similarly, rote learning of the catechism as the central teaching method in religious education continued until the twentieth century. The effect of the Council of Trent on religious education and celebration cannot be overestimated.

When Catholic schools were eventually opened in Australia after the arrival of Fr John Therry in 1820, the schools provided instruction in secular subjects as well as religion and the accepted teaching method in all areas was that of memorisation. So the use of the catechism with its question and answer format was consistent educationally in a system that favoured recall of facts over comprehension. Lovat (1989) contends “it could be argued that ‘Dogmatic Catechetics’ is more a form of *indoctrination*, than religious *education*” (p. 6). However, it continued as the primary method of instruction until the next century.

Twentieth Century

The twentieth century brought with it more progressive theories of education which questioned ways of knowing and learning. When coupled with Pope Pius X’s (1910) lowering of the age for receiving communion from early adolescence to about seven years, the church was forced to consider new, more appropriate methods in religious education, including sacramental education.

Dewey (1934) was highly influential as an educational theorist and suggested that learning took place as a result of experiences. Moreover, he was an educator who recognised the value of the Arts in church history and religious education and lamented its demise. He claimed that more than the laws and authority of the church,

The influence that counted in the daily life of the mass of people and that gave them a sense of unity was constituted, it is safe to surmise, by sacraments, by songs and pictures, by rite and ceremony, all having an esthetic [*sic*] strand, more than by any other one thing...because of the esthetic strand, religious teachings were the more readily conveyed and their effect was the more lasting. By the art in them, they were changed from doctrines into living experiences (Dewey, 1934, p. 329).

Kerygmatic Approach

In the lead-up to Vatican II (1962 - 1965) and in light of more experiential teaching methods, the scripturally based kerygmatic approach was introduced in Australia during the 1950s.

The kerygmatic approach invited students to find their way to God by learning bible stories, singing, praying, and dancing the traditions of the Church. This new approach took account of contemporary theories of classroom teaching and learning which argued for a more active approach (Ryan & Malone, 1996, p. 40).

Teachers were encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods. "Singing, gestures and creative movement, miming, puppetry, storytelling and dramatisation, modelling and

construction activities were ways suggested to teachers to engage students' imagination" (Ryan, 1997, p. 12) thus signalling a return to aesthetic modes of learning. This method was more engaging for the children but assumed they had a faith connection to the Catholic Church and consequently sought a faith response from them. Catechesis, or passing on the faith, was still the aim of religious education.

While the kerygmatic era was still in its infancy, the changes which came to the church as a result of Vatican II dictated its demise. No longer could it be expected that children receiving religious education were practicing Catholics. Vatican II "marked an official end of the siege mentality" (Lovat, 1989, p. 8) of the Catholic Church. The Church now acknowledged that there was a plurality in Catholicism which allowed for differing local practices of liturgy and education. This in turn allowed for greater religious freedom on the part of those receiving religious education and a recognition that the students may not all be at the same point of readiness or have the same religious experiences or backgrounds. So "if catechesis was to be meaningful for contemporary students in Australian Catholic schools, it would need to emphasise and take account of the life experience and interests of students" (Ryan, 1997, pp. 47- 48).

When seeking to refresh the Church's understanding of the sacraments of initiation, the Second Vatican Council, looked back past the Council of Trent and Medieval practice to the early church. Thereby, the sequence was named as Baptism, Confirmation and Communion and there was a call for the re-introduction of adult initiation to co-exist with infant baptism. Both rites were reviewed and included provision for adaptation for each country, rather than the uniformity demanded by the Council of Trent. It was still some

time before sacramental preparation for children was also returned to the community-based process of the early church rather than taking place in the Catholic schools.

Life-Centred Approach

At a similar time, Ronald Goldman took up the challenge to find more appropriate ways of teaching children religion. His ideas, discussed in his seminal publication, *Readiness for Religion* (1965) “move away from older authoritarian methods of teaching to methods involving personal participation by the child so that he [*sic*] is encouraged to find out for himself” (p. xi). Clearly, Goldman did not condone indoctrination but supported the Council’s notion of religious freedom.

Goldman regularly suggested the use of the Arts in his religion lessons including role-play, dramatisation, mime, hymn composition and dance. “Play and artistic pursuits help emotion and intellect to fuse together into first-hand knowledge” (Goldman, 1965, p. 85). He claimed, “the revolution required in religious education is in the methods of teaching as much as the content” (Goldman, 1965, p. 200). Goldman’s method used the children’s real-life experiences to teach religion and employed age-appropriate activities based on ‘life-themes’ ranging from very familiar topics which included nature and self in the early years, to abstract concepts such as Christian faith in the later years of schooling (Goldman, 1965, p. 46 - 49).

While on the whole, the life-centred lessons were greeted enthusiastically by both students and teachers (Ryan & Malone, 1996; Lovat, 1989) there were concerns with this method also. It pre-supposed faith on the part of not only the student but also the teacher.

Many believed that this approach did not provide enough emphasis on church teachings and therefore left the children with no rules to follow. “Life experience catechesis underlined the need that any community has to maintain its traditions, pass on its beliefs and values to the rising generation and ensure its survival” (Ryan, 1997, p. 63).

Furthermore, by advocating the use of experiential learning, a teaching method which was not widely used in other teaching areas, Religious Education was effectively isolated from other more ‘serious’ subjects. The Arts had not yet been embraced as a legitimate teaching method in other subject areas. Lovat suggests that it did have the effect of breaking old moulds and re-invigorating Religious Education in full for a time at least.

The jump from the prescriptive, doctrinal methods to the experiential approach was certainly a quantum leap and neither was ideal for religious education. Lovat sums it up thus:

While the prescriptive approach stressed *only* the objective/quantitative’, the experiential approach stressed *only* the ‘subjective/qualitative’. In this sense, *both are equally educationally unsound and incomplete*, and so RE teachers could be seen to have simply ‘jumped from one frying pan into another’, albeit on the other side of the stove’ (Lovat , 1989, p. 19).

The second half of the twentieth century saw significant developments in educational theory within the Arts, resulting in more educationally sound ways of incorporating

experiential learning into all areas of education, including religion. These approaches stress both cognitive and affective methods and will be discussed later in this chapter. This thesis concurs with Lovat's brave observation that "life-centred RE may just have been a little ahead of its time" (Lovat, 2002, p. 20).

Praxis Model

Thomas Groome aimed to utilize both the subjective and objective in his approach to Christian religious education which he called *Shared Christian Praxis*.

Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as *a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith*' (Groome, 1980, p. 184).

Groome's aim was to find the intersection between a person's own story and the Christian story "in order to lead a person to an owned faith and a decision for a lived response in faith" (Ryan, 1997, p. 76). He began with the lived experiences of the students, involved them in dialogue and critical reflection so that they could develop new understandings.

Groome drew upon the educational theories of Habermas, Dewey and Freire in allowing for the freedom of the student in the religion classroom. Habermas described praxis as theory and practice working together for change. For Dewey learning is based on experience and Freire believed that teaching was not about 'depositing' information into students but facilitating learning which took place through reflection and action. By

allowing for this critical self-reflection, Groome had steered religious education away from earlier models which relied on indoctrination. However, he still worked from the assumption that the students had a commitment to the Christian faith, albeit at different levels. Whilst others may see this bias towards Christianity as a weakness and denial of religious freedom, Groome responds:

Once and for all, let us reject religious education that pretends to teach objectively about religion, that is, religious education that does not engage and affect people's lives. Likewise, let us beware of catechesis that unreflectively socializes people into church membership without education in the spiritual wisdom of Christian Faith (Groome, 2003, p. 1).

Constructivist Approach

Michael Grimmitt (2000) also offers a model for involving children in religious education in such a way that both their affective and rational selves are engaged. He has based his pedagogy on constructivist theories of learning whereby the learner constructs new knowledge on the foundation of past experience. In this model, the emphasis is again on the student as creator of their own understandings rather than on the teacher 'depositing' information.

Grimmit suggests a three stage pedagogical strategy based on the principles of constructivism:

1. Preparatory work in which the students reflect on their own experiences with the religious concept.
2. Direct contact with specific religious content but without instruction or information. The pupils are able to construct their own initial understandings based on past experiences.
3. Supplementary information is shared with the students “which enables their constructions to become more complex and embrace alternative perspectives” (Grimmitt, 2000, p. 217).

Grimmitt claimed that using constructivist learning theory in religious education is effective because “constructivism emphasises the importance of encouraging pupils to explore ideas and issues for themselves and arrive at their own conclusions” (Grimmitt, 2000, p. 223). Drama educators also acknowledge the importance of emancipatory methods in teaching and learning, through which new knowledge is created. This takes place through an aesthetic experience which relies on cognitive and affective engagement and critical thinking. Therefore educational drama is an effective teaching tool in religious education which is based in experiential and emancipatory methods.

Increasingly, classrooms in Catholic schools echoed the pluralistic nature of all society in that it could no longer be assumed that the children were Christian, Catholic or churched. By offering only catechetical models of religious education to these students, it was claimed that their religious freedom was being compromised. Therefore it became clear to religious educators that an approach not based on catechesis was necessary. “These educators sought a new foundation. This new foundation comprised ideas drawn from

curriculum theory and educational philosophy, rather than from the Church's catechetical tradition" (Ryan, 1997, p. 85).

Educational Approach

The work of Ninian Smart was integral in the development of a model of religious education which provided this type of religious freedom. This method involved studying the seven common phenomena or elements of a religion, for example rituals, stories, beliefs, and comparing these across religions. The students were not required to make any religious commitment as they took the role of participant observers to obtain an insider's view of the religion. Smart (1991) believed that when studying a religion, the pupil must try to enter into the inner workings of the religion so that they could "penetrate into the hearts and minds of those who have been involved" (Smart, 1991, p. 12).

Through this 'stepping into the shoes' of the participants, Smart acknowledged the importance of experience and claimed, "the interplay between doctrine and experiences is fundamental to personal religion" (Smart 1991, p. 12). In saying this he echoed other voices which called for experiential learning in religion (Groome, 1980; Harris, 1987; Watts & Williams, 1988; Tacey, 2003; Hyde, 2005).

Graham Rossiter was a leader in the field of religious education in Australia in the 1980s, calling for a 'creative divorce' between the catechetical and the educational. He insisted upon the students' right to choose what they believed. "After 'divorce proceedings', religious education would not be so much a catechetical as an educational enterprise" (Arthur & Gaine, 1996, p. 341). Religion would be studied as an academic subject with no

expectation of a faith response from teacher or student. Rossiter did not believe that catechesis should be excluded but he believed that faith could be nurtured through both approaches.

Church Documents

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) was the first time a Church document made a clear distinction between ‘catechesis’ and ‘religious instruction’ whilst still acknowledging a close connection between the two. This document encouraged the school to be part of the evangelising mission of church. It acknowledged the presence of non-Catholics in the school and respected their religious freedom but it is also clear about the religious freedom of the school as part of the Church, to offer catechesis.

On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, p. 11).

Therefore, those involved in religious education in Catholic schools have the words of educationalists in one ear demanding a clear split between catechesis and education in religion, and Church teaching in the other, urging proclamation of the Gospel. The challenge is to discover a way of marrying these two seemingly opposing voices.

This is especially challenging in sacramental preparation because of the nature of the content and the experience. A common understanding of sacrament is as an outward sign of inward grace which was instituted by Christ. Modern theologians now claim “the sacraments are not simply acts of Christ but also of the community, are not only channels of grace but also acts of faith and worship” (Hellwig, 1987, p. 509). The role of the ‘recipient’ of the sacraments is active and demands a faith response. “Schillebeeckx emphasizes the role of active faith in sacraments without which they cannot be fruitful” (Irwin, 1987, p. 920).

Furthermore, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Archdiocese of Chicago, 1991, 59) states emphatically “[The sacraments] not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it”. If a subset of Religious Education is helping the children prepare to receive the sacraments of initiation, it seems necessary to assist them in their faith development through school and parish education initiatives.

Brisbane Catholic Education’s *A Statement on Religious Education for Catholic Schools* claims, “the primary focus of the classroom teaching of religion is educational” (Barry & Brennan, 1997a, p. 12). Barry and Brennan also acknowledge the innate spirituality of each individual and maintain, “any genuine education must address this religious dimension of life” (p. 12). They suggest, “classroom teachers of religion...seek to foster the religious understanding, and *nurture the faith growth of their students through effective teaching*” [my italics] (Barry & Brennan, 1997a, p. 8).

The Statement claims that “by way of ritual, signs, symbols, music, song and sacred objects” (Barry & Brennan, 1997a, p. 30) the students learn about the sacraments through participation in sacramental celebrations. Further learning about the sacraments is centred in the educationally focused classroom teaching. The Brisbane Catholic Education module, *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2002) which is based on the Statement lays the foundation for the teaching which takes place in the early years. There is an assumption that learning about the sacraments occurs throughout the child’s years at school and beyond.

The sacramental policy of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, *Children and the Sacraments* (1997) also relies upon ongoing education about and through the sacraments. This takes place within the parish community. However, it suggests that this recurring catechesis is delegated to the parish school through its religious education programme (p. 13). For children who are attending other than Catholic schools, the parish provides the catechesis. The Policy recommends that children attending the parish school also participate in parish sacramental programmes. When the decision was made to move formal sacramental preparation from the school and reinstate it as a community responsibility, it should have enabled a clear distinction in the roles of the parish and school but this does not appear to be the case.

The relationship between faith development and religious education seems to be a troubled one. Perhaps what is needed more than a ‘creative divorce’ is a ‘creative mixed marriage’ which puts the religious freedom of the children first. This freedom must be

honoured in such a way that the children are enabled to learn through educational methods which allow choice. Maurice Ryan suggests:

For classroom teaching to be more than merely telling students what to believe and how to think about religious matters, creativity and imagination are required. Here, the best allies may be those teaching approaches in other curriculum areas which are successful in engaging students' interests (Ryan, 1997, p. 93).

Vines and Yates (2000) join Bidwell (1990) in suggesting that “dramatic experience is a resource that students can enjoy and that appears to foster motivation” (Bidwell in Vines & Yates, 2000, p. 112). This thesis concurs and contends that the Arts and educational drama in particular, are motivational, engaging and allow for religious freedom as advocated by the Church and proponents of an educational approach to religious education. Therefore they are ideally situated as a teaching method in religious education.

Arts-based Approach

In taking up the challenge of using the Arts in religious education, Peta Goldberg has proposed an arts-based approach to religious education in her unpublished doctoral thesis, *Religious Education and the Creative Arts: a Critical Exploration* (2001). Goldberg notes that religious educators have only looked to connecting with other curriculum areas within the last two decades (p. 236). She claims that that the approach is rooted in the educational model described above but has also “drawn on the use of the arts by the

Christian church in instruction and faith development over the centuries” (Goldburg, 2001, p. 238).

Goldburg has used comments by Maria Harris (1979) as a point of departure for her ‘Critically Engaging Creative Arts’ (CECA) Approach to religious education (p. 235). She clearly agrees with Harris that not enough attention has been paid to the Arts in religious education and that the gap between the Arts and the teaching of religion should be bridged.

(Religious education is) a field where the religious intersects with education and the aesthetic is a dimension of both... Religion, with its ties to creativity and feeling, has always been the vehicle through which people have expressed their relationship to the divine. Education, with its focus on the intentional reconstruction of experience, has relied strongly on the creation of *conceptual* form, but is in need of the *perceptible* form more proper to art. Thus the field can only be enhanced by the inclusion of the aesthetic (Harris in Goldburg, 2001, p. 235).

The CECA Approach has three parts or movements: Inquiry, Investigation, Appraisal and Demonstration. It involves the students critically engaging with various ‘texts’ including literature, film, paintings and songs. While the thesis concentrates on biblical studies, Goldburg suggests it is suitable in many areas of Religious Education. Goldburg states that the method is “not specifically related to content but rather to the way students are

invited to take part in the process of learning through critical engagement with the Arts” (Goldburg, 2001, p. 251).

Lee (1995) also advocates for a union between religious and drama education and draws attention to their joint relationship “throughout the ages in ritual and celebration across a myriad of religious and cultural frameworks” (p. 26). Focussing on the work of Yates (1987), Lee discusses common ground shared by the Arts and religion suggesting that firstly, both fields rely on the imagination to make meaning. Secondly, they use symbol, metaphor and other creative language to convey meaning and finally, “both the Arts and religion engage in the presentation of images and patterns of meaning regarding the ultimate nature of existence” (Lee, 1995, p. 27). Lee further contends that learning through drama takes place in the aesthetic domain which in turn may lead to religious empowerment.

Working in the field of spirituality rather than the Arts, Hyde (2005) and de Souza (2005) nevertheless recommend the aesthetic as a mode of spiritual nourishment. de Souza suggests that planning in religious education should be explicit in three dimensions: cognitive, affective and spiritual. In her description of the spiritual she includes inner reflecting and intuiting. It might be suggested that drama educators would include these in the affective or aesthetic domain. She further contends that to address this triad of learning “activities that draw on the inner self and involve creativity, imagination, storytelling, reflection and contemplation, stillness and silence” (de Souza, 2005, p. 46) should be used. These are strategies which educational drama could offer to students of Religious Education.

Hyde suggests that providing bodily and sensory experiences is “essential in nurturing spirituality in children” and stresses that specific planning for these experiences is crucial (Hyde, 2005, p. 61). Whilst he does not name drama, it is suggested here that it is a most effective way of offering children an experience where senses, body and mind are engaged.

Jan Grajczonek advocates the use of imaginative methods such as literature and drama, particularly process drama, in Religious Education in the early years (Grajczonek, 2001, 2003). “Nye and Hay (1996) have named imagination as a sub-category that can be used to develop spirituality” (in Grajczonek, 2001, p. 26) and Grajczonek claims it is equally essential in developing religious concepts in young children who are not yet religiously literate.

Importantly, Grajczonek is concerned with teaching about the sacraments and states that because of the pluralistic nature of classrooms in Catholic schools, it is not relevant for children who have no experience of the rites and rituals of the Catholic Church to be introduced to them without some preliminary conceptual work. She argues for:

...a more explicit ‘pre-religious literacy’ curriculum
and offers as an example, the development of a
pre-sacramental education through children’s
literature, as one way to develop prior knowledge and
understanding of the life concepts embedded in the
sacraments (Grajczonek 2001, p.24).

While Grajczonek suggests literature in this instance, it is proposed here that educational drama is also ideal as a tool to develop pre-sacramental concepts in children because it places imagination in a central role in learning.

If the aim of religious education is religious literacy (Barry & Brennan, 1997b, p. 18) and if sacramental experiences are to be enhanced, it is suggested that learning activities begin with religious concepts that are within the present experience of the children. Grajczonek compares 'pre-religious literacy' with the pre-reading, pre-number and pre-writing activities so plentiful in schools. If religious education is intent on employing the same educational approaches that are present in other curriculum areas, then it would seem that pre-religious literacy would be foundational for religious literacy. Drama is able to provide a rigorous educational approach as it offers a 'way of knowing' in religious education. To further understand this union, a discussion on 'ways of knowing' is relevant.

WAYS OF KNOWING

Throughout history, many of the great educators have separated reason from emotion and believed that reason and logic provided the only true knowledge. From Plato, through Augustine and Aquinas there was a perception that there was an elite group who possessed this scientific, rational knowledge. They believed that the emotions were unreliable and not to be depended upon. There was also an understanding that the student was like an empty vessel which a teacher could fill with knowledge. This prescriptive form of education went largely unchallenged until the eighteenth century and has influenced education for much longer.

While Kant (1724 - 1804) agreed with the dichotomy between the different parts of the intellect, he devoted much time to discussing the notion of aesthetic understanding.

Scruton (1982) claims that without Kant “aesthetics would not exist in its modern form” (p. 79). Kant believed that knowledge is constructed, based on past experience. He suggested

We begin from experience, but knowledge does not come from experience alone. The world of sensibilia stimulates our senses, and by intuition we gather our first perceptions of things. Then the faculty of understanding takes over to form these perceptions into concepts that are ‘thought’

(Groome, 1991, p. 67).

Kant’s description of cognition separates theoretical (scientific) reason and practical reason which he explains as knowledge of God, freedom and immortality. He describes these as ‘supersensible realities’. Scruton, explaining Kant’s position suggests that ‘in the aesthetic experience we view ourselves in relation to a transcendental, or supersensible, reality which lies beyond the reach of thought’ (Scruton, 1982, p. 89).

Howard Gardner’s seminal work *Frames of Mind* (1983), argues that there are seven forms of intelligence: spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic and logical-mathematical. Whilst noting that linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences are often favoured in schools, Gardner (1983, 1991, 1993) believes all seven intelligences are of equal value. He believes that in most people they

work together to solve problems, a phenomena he refers to as the plurality of intellect or intelligences. Gardner argues that each intelligence is distinct and developing one does not necessarily develop another. Schools should aim to develop each of the intelligences to the full potential of the child. “People who are helped to do so, I believe, feel more engaged and competent, and therefore more inclined to serve the society in a constructive way” (Gardner, 1993, p. 9).

The twentieth century also saw many other developments in theories of knowing. Hirst and Peters (1970) put forward a ‘forms of knowledge’ theory which suggests seven separate types of knowledge and ways of knowing. These are Mathematics and Logic, the Physical Sciences, the Human Sciences, Literature and Fine Arts, History, Philosophy and Religion (in Lovat, 1989, p. 22). Each of these seven forms and the ways in which they are learnt, are very separate. According to Hirst and Peters, knowledge in religion was learnt through specifically religious methods and could not be learnt by methods used in, for example, science or the Arts. This theory might help to explain why Religious Education in the seventies employed methods not used in other subject areas.

Jurgen Habermas belonged to a group known as ‘critical theorists’ who became popular late in the 1970s. He put forward an alternate ‘way of knowing’ theory which was more succinct, suggesting three ways of knowing. Perhaps most importantly though, was his conviction that each of these ways operated in all subject areas, in stark contrast to Hirst and Peters’ model.

Habermas' three ways of knowing were: cognitive knowing which involved facts and rules, interpretive knowing which included understanding and making links, and critical or self-reflective knowing which was concerned with the student's freedom to form their own opinions. This final way of knowing was the pinnacle of knowledge and relied on the students finding answers for themselves, questioning the facts and how they were presented and not necessarily relying on the teacher to supply answers. Students working in this domain would be encouraged to have a healthy scepticism for what was presented to them and through critical reflection, come to know things for themselves (Lovat, 2002, pp. 21 - 22).

Habermas believed that people wanted to be free to form their own opinions and come to their own understandings and this third way of knowing was imperative in achieving this. “‘Critical’ knowing is impelled by the supreme and ultimately uncompromising ‘cognitive interest’ that each of us possesses to be free in all things, including what we claim to ‘know’” (Lovat, 2001, p. 4).

Lovat lists key theorists such as Dewey (1902), Piaget (1959), Kohlberg (1963) and Fowler (1981) who all argue for freedom of choice as the high point of maturity in gaining knowledge (Lovat, 2001, p. 4). Believing that freedom is essential in all education, Lovat suggests it is even more pertinent in religious education. Therefore he recommends the employment of methodologies which allow for freedom of choice. This thesis suggests that drama is one such methodology and that using drama as an educational tool allows for cognitive and affective freedom through high levels of aesthetic knowing and critical reflection. Similarly, through knowing which comes from

an aesthetic experience, the students if they chose, would have the opportunity to deepen their faith.

Aesthetic Knowing

The word ‘aesthetic’ derives from the Greek, “*aisthetika* meaning *things perceptible through the senses*, with the verb stem *aisthe* meaning: *to feel, to apprehend through the senses*” (Abbs, 1987, p. 53). Abbs concurs with Kant’s understanding of aesthetic as “the a priori principles of sensuous knowledge” (Abbs, 1987, p. 54). It is in the sensing: touching, tasting, feeling, hearing and seeing that we arrive at knowing.

Abbs reminds us that these same senses are the agents of our first response as humans. “Long before we are rational beings, we are aesthetic beings” (Abbs, 1989b, p. 4). Abbs suggests that this aesthetic response “constitutes a form of intelligence comparable to, though different from other forms of intelligence, such as the mode of logical deduction” (Abbs, 1989b, p. 4).

Dewey (1934) claimed that the aesthetic was present in all experiences. He differentiated between things which are experienced in a random way and having *an* experience “when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment” (Dewey, 1934, p. 35). Through reflection, emerging ideas are related to past experiences and developed into present realisations. An experience such as this can be isolated from previous experiences and has its own beginning and end. It is this type of experience which Dewey suggested has the potential to be an aesthetic experience.

However, he warned that the aesthetic must be made explicit for the experience to be transformational. This requires both intellectual and emotional engagement as the aesthetic is highlighted, clarified and drawn out of the experience. By not paying particular attention to the aesthetic, an experience remains ‘pregnant’ (p. 54) and unable to reach its full life-giving potential. Dewey continues the birthing metaphor when he describes the three essential ingredients of an aesthetic experience. Firstly there is an inception stage where material is taken in and related to past experiences. This is followed by development or “incubation which goes on until what is conceived is brought forth and is rendered perceptible as part of the common world (thus resulting in) an inclusive and fulfilling close” (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). Dewey promoted the Arts as a way of providing just such *an* experience.

The philosopher, Maxine Greene, who has been a significant voice in the development of theories of aesthetic knowing, is influenced by the work of John Dewey. She posits that the imagination has the power to create alternate worlds in which aesthetic knowing is possible.

Dewey wrote that the opposite of ‘aesthetic’ is the ‘anaesthetic’; and, believing that, I view aesthetic education as a mode of countering the anaesthetic, awakening people to ellipses they never knew existed or to plunging leaps they could never have conjured up themselves (Greene, 1999, p. 13).

Marian de Souza (2005) discovered in her research (1999) that many students found religious education less than stimulating. By using drama in Religious Education as a door to the aesthetic, this ‘anaesthetic’ effect may be lessened.

Helen Nicholson takes up Dewey's notion of the aesthetic as opposite to anaesthetic when she says:

The aesthetic is about feeling fully alive – not just existing, following familiar routines and patterns of existence – but a particular kind of knowing and feeling which allows us to be both fully 'present' in the moment and also conscious of its past and future significance (Nicholson, 1999, p. 81).

Nicholson claims that the role of aesthetic education is not to unite those involved in the experience but to offer opportunities to explore ambiguities and even to highlight differences. She sees this as emancipatory and offering opportunities to both self-know and to other-know. Donelan too, suggests that drama has the potential to enable its participants "to experience reflective and transformative explorations of self [*sic*] and Other" (Pedelty in Donelan, 2002, p. 43). This may be achieved in the relational setting of a drama lesson where self and other might be explored through emancipatory methods in teaching and learning where the students are lead to explore, struggle with and accept or reject what has been experienced.

This developing relationship with self and other takes us into the realm of spirituality. Greene (1999) claimed that "the idea of aesthetic education is to arouse people to become more than passive onlookers, to be willing to engage" (p. 17) in decision making about issues central to life within the areas of morals, ethics, values and spirituality. Similarly,

one of Heathcote's 'guarantees for drama' was clarifying values (Wagner, 1990, p. 227).

With regard to teaching in this spiritual realm Greene warned:

It should be clear that we can never impose an interpretation on anyone when we undertake aesthetic education. We can only provoke each one to wonder, to probe, to discern connections, to reach deeper, to seek out more and more' (Greene, 1999, p. 16).

A discussion of spirituality within the drama and religious education classroom will help to further understand its position in both disciplines and its importance to the total development of the learner.

Spiritual Knowing

There are wide understandings of 'spirituality' in today's society. Brendan Hyde (2005) claims

Much of the recent scholarship suggests that spirituality is concerned with an individual's sense of connectedness and relationship with the Self, the Other in community, the Other in the world or universe and with the Transcendent Other.

Scholarly literature has also described spirituality as an inherent and fundamental quality of what it means to be human (Hyde, 2005, p. 54).

Significantly, de Souza adds to this that spirituality is “an innate and essential element of every person” (de Souza, 2005, p. 41) and it must be nurtured for the successful development of the whole person.

In a review of *The Divine Kiss* by Con Koukias, Haseman (1999) reminds us of Kant’s claim that artists venture “to give sensible expression to rational beings, in the realm of the blessed, the realm of hell, eternity, creation and so on” (Kant in Haseman, 1999, p. 24). He contends that it is part of being an artist to dwell on and give meaning to these spiritual questions. Haseman also warns that

Such talk of ‘spiritualism’ opens the doorway
(a stairway to heaven?) to a difficult and
problematic area in art – the relationship between
indeterminate meaning and the divine. Many prefer
to ignore or deny this completely for it seems just
too mystical and cosmic to be usefully investigated
or understood. But, as Tina Hong said yesterday,
we need to probe beyond the ‘WOW’ factor in art
and examine the nature and types of engagement
particular works offer’ (Haseman, 1999, p. 22).

Haseman challenges drama teachers to acknowledge, “the key role aesthetic ideas play in any art work which aspires to the transcendent and the metaphysical” (Haseman, 1999, p. 25) and to include more opportunities to explore these difficult, abstract notions.

King (2001) points out the dual understanding of spirituality including that which is implicit in religious traditions and as a more generic term “widely and often loosely used” (p. 5). For King, spirituality relates to all of life and “is also about listening with the heart, a discipline which has to be learnt” (King, 2001, p. 10). Liddy (2002) insists, “a fundamental responsibility of the classroom religious education curriculum should be to nurture the spiritual life of each one of these children” (p. 13). Tacey (2003) concurs and calls upon religious educators to be spiritual educators, believing that the spirit needs to be discovered and nurtured before religious knowing is possible. He claims,

When the spirit is activated and recognised, the student tends to develop or discover (as the case may be) a natural interest in religion, because religion offers the spirit a complex language, a sense of tradition and cultural memory (Tacey, 2003, p. 77).

Tacey warns against beginning spiritual education with scripture, traditions or even liturgy but rather with experiences of life in the Arts, creation and feelings because spirituality “is an art of the imagination and that to see spirit correctly involves an education or development of the imaginative faculty” (p. 211). Tacey discusses ‘peak experiences’ (p. 81) in which the sacred is discovered in an everyday experience, in this case in nature. Perhaps Dewey or Greene may have described these as ‘aesthetic experiences’. In either case, by exploring the spiritual in the experience, religious knowing was made possible.

Religious Knowing

Thomas Groome suggests that “the way of knowing we choose as a bedrock for Christian religious education must be consistent with and capable of promoting a knowing of the Lord as that is understood in Scripture” (Groome, 1980, p. 141). He also acknowledges that this will not be the only way of knowing and that we should also look to more modern theories. He is particularly indebted to Habermas, Freire and Dewey. However, he notes that in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible:

The Hebrew verb for “know” is *yada*. For the Hebrews *yada* is more by the heart than by the mind, and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience’ (Groome, 1980, p. 141).

In the New Testament too, knowing God is an experiential phenomena but it is based on God’s activity in the past. By telling the stories of God’s people in the past, they came to know God in the present. “From a biblical perspective, then, Christian religious education should be grounded in a relational/experiential/reflective way of knowing” (Groome, 1980, p. 145). Educational drama provides exactly this grounding.

In a later publication Groome (1998) offers ‘a wisdom way of knowing’ as the preferred model. This is explained in fifteen requirements (Groome, 1998, pp. 289 - 298) and summarised thus:

Teachers mentor learners to:

- Think for themselves
- In dialogue with others
- About meaning for life (Groome, 1998, p. 308).

This will be achieved through critical reflection and experiential methods which engage heart, spirit and mind.

Groome calls for an end to the dichotomy between theoretical and practical reasoning preferring an holistic way of knowing that is based on both tradition and experience. This is ‘wisdom knowing’, which Groome (1998) believes “reaches its peak as the personification of God” (p. 279). He suggests that this wisdom is the ultimate aim of education and is manifested when what is known is evident by the way one lives.

Whilst Watts and Williams (1988) recognise that not everyone accepts the concept of religious knowing, they support it as a cognitive activity that demands emotional involvement. Neither do they defend the notion of a dichotomy between these two activities. In fact they suggest that it is through religious and aesthetic knowing that we are able to transcend the division between faith and reason.

Along with Dewey (1934), they acknowledge the benefits of experience in developing religious understanding. “Religious knowledge acquired through direct experience seems able to direct people’s lives in a way that mere assent to doctrine does not” (Watts & Williams, 1988, p. 3). However, they also caution against ignoring cognition in the process. “Our central thrust has been to reject the common assumption that religious

beliefs are arrived at by a process of 'faith' that is wholly distinct from the cognitive processes by which other human knowledge is acquired (Watts & Williams, 1988, p. 58). By employing educational drama as a tool to teach religious education, both cognitive and aesthetic aims may be realised in the quest for religious knowing.

Watts and Williams (1988) suggestion that "religious knowing involves, not so much coming to know a separate religious world, as coming to know the religious dimension of the everyday world" (p. 151) could be linked to Dewey's (1934) notion of the aesthetic being present in all things and Augustine's (b. 354) view of a sacramental presence in all things. Similarly, it is Greeley's (2000) belief that "God lurks everywhere (and the) key component of Catholic imagination (is) sacramentality, the presence of God in all creation" (Greeley, 2000, p. 24). McBrien makes the extravagant claim that "the major theological, pastoral and even aesthetical characteristic of Catholicism is its commitment to the principle of *sacramentality*" (McBrien, 1994, p. 787).

Groome too takes up this line of thought stating, "sacramentality... fosters an incarnational and holistic faith, a faith that engages the whole person, body and soul, mind and senses" (Groome, 1998, p. 135). In trying to achieve this lofty aim Moore (2000) proposed "this is our challenge as religious educators – to be sacramental teachers and to inspire others in sacramental living" (p. 43).

Maria Harris (1987) believed that when viewed through the lens of sacramental imagination, all things are capable of being sacrament. That is, they reveal the presence of God, the gracious, the holy, the divine (p. 22). She recommends providing opportunities

for this revelation to take place but, being strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's philosophy of education for freedom, the teaching method will be such that the student is able to make the discovery and is not merely presented with the facts. Harris suggests a range of activities including parables and drama to achieve this (p. 70).

In developing her argument for nurturing a religious imagination, Harris (1987) draws on Kant's view of imagination as being a processor of information from the intellect and the emotions. She describes religious imagination as being involved with "what is of ultimate concern and meaning" (Harris, 1987, p. 12). Furthermore, the religious imagination has four forms: contemplative, creative, aesthetic and sacramental imagination. Through these four forms of the religious imagination, students are led to reach an incarnational understanding where the 'word is made flesh' and real knowing has taken place.

Harris taught a course titled 'The Aesthetic and Religious Education' which was based on her assumptions that teaching is where the religious intersects with education, and that imagination and aesthetic are part of both religion and education (Harris, 1987, p. 147). This was her justification for the integration of religious and aesthetic education.

I would fight for it (the aesthetic) as an essential course precisely because of its integrating, holistic and digesting quality. The artistic in the curriculum provides an oasis where people can, in peace, let their understanding, their intellect, and their feeling come together without pressure, but with support from within the institution where they are learning (Harris, 1987, p. 148).

This thesis argues that educational drama, as a field within aesthetic education fulfils these requirements. Harris alludes to this when she says, “it is a rare subject matter that cannot be learned through pantomime, embodiment, and creative dramatics... the use of drama ‘fixes’ insights in ways that accompany and enrich conceptual material” (Harris, 1987, p. 171).

This chapter has attempted to trace the somewhat bumpy journey of religious education and its relationship with the Arts, most especially educational drama. Drama has also travelled a rocky road at times as it found its place in education. The most significant developments to this discussion begin with the work of Dorothy Heathcote.

EDUCATIONAL DRAMA

A Door to the Aesthetic

The twentieth century saw drama develop as a teaching method in other curriculum areas with Dorothy Heathcote being arguably the most influential practitioner. Bolton (1998) suggests that to Heathcote, drama’s main function was in developing meaning, in producing a change in understanding. To Heathcote, drama was to be at the centre of learning. “The art form of Drama was to be a ‘crucible’ for knowledge” (Bolton, 1998, p. 177). Hers was a ‘living through’ drama approach whereby the participants worked together to achieve an end or solve a problem. So drama came to be seen as method of problem-solving and learning across curriculum areas.

A defining aspect of Heathcote’s work was her ‘teacher in role’ strategy. She became a co-worker with the children and was able to advance the drama from within. By working

in role, the teacher is able to 'model' language and roles appropriate to the drama. At times, the teacher would take on a 'lower status' role and therefore allow the children to be the 'experts'. Heathcote's aim was always to enable the children to take control of the drama and to discover what they already knew but did not yet know they knew. Therefore reflection was a very important part of the drama.

Heathcote's approach to drama in education invited the children on a field trip into the 'wilderness of the left hand,' (Wagner, 1990) a place where knowing takes place at an intrinsic level. Left-handed knowing assimilates information gathered from intellectual and emotional sources. This is aesthetic knowing and Heathcote is unsure of what children will experience in this 'wilderness', promising only to open up the space where left-handed or aesthetic knowing can take place.

Havell (1987) credits Bolton with leading the field in the development of a theory of the aesthetic experience in drama. Bolton has suggested that "aesthetic intention, aesthetic attention and an overall aesthetic conception by the teachers" (in Havell, 1987, p. 177) are central to an aesthetic experience. Each of these involves an expectation that the aesthetic can and will be encountered.

Aesthetic intention requires all those participating in the drama to be involved in searching for symbols and their meanings. The aesthetic is at work when the search for symbols is paramount. Attending aesthetically describes the participant's awareness of the developing meaning and the artistic form at either a conscious or intuitive level. "It is the teacher's task to provide an overall aesthetic conception of the drama experience"

(Havell ,1987, p. 179) and guide the children towards it, helping them to discover and give voice to what they find.

Likewise, Judith McLean (1996) offers a “methodology that privileges the aesthetic experience as the central feature of learning in drama” (Hoepper & Taylor in McLean, 1996, p. 3). She acknowledges the difficulty in defining ‘aesthetic’ but refers to the work of several writers (Dewey, 1934; Abbs, 1989; Willis 1990; Foucault in McHoul & Grace 1993) and offers a rich discussion of the philosophical stands of these and others in the field. McLean posits that a knowledge of the range of viewpoints is vital for the teacher to develop what she calls an ‘aesthetic consciousness’ (p. 20).

McLean (1996) calls for teachers to develop their own ‘aesthetic consciousness’ whereby they understand the benefits of aesthetic engagement. She bases her theory on the work of John Dewey (1934) in *Art As Experience* where he suggests an ‘aesthetic apprenticeship’ for artists so that they can gain an understanding of the aesthetic mode. This can be done by examining the available literature on aesthetics and “then, by working with students using the artist form, they may use this heightened awareness to engage students in a meaningful aesthetic experience” (McLean, 1996, p. 13). Clearly, for the teacher to provide opportunities for and to be able to guide aesthetic experiences, she or he must have an understanding of what might constitute these experiences. Similarly, Greene does not underestimate the role of the teacher and cautions, “important as the incorporation of aesthetic education in curricula may be, it is the teacher who makes the difference” (p. 15).

According to McLean, the aesthetic experience must not be left to chance. Rather it is planned for and made explicit through “three important criteria of drama pedagogy that are situated at the centre of the aesthetic experience:

- dialogue
- experiential learning and teacher and students working as co-artists
- critical reflection” (McLean ,1996, p. 14).

As Dewey (1934) declared, by providing *an* experience for the children and making the aesthetic explicit, the experience had the power to be transformational.

One of the key strategies in all educational drama is that of teacher and students collaborating together in the learning. The teacher’s role is not that of the expert imparting knowledge. “Good drama praxis works towards a joint partnership where knowledge, talents and skills are shared” (Taylor, 2000, p. 119). In discussing drama praxis, Taylor uses terms such as ‘artist-educator’ to describe the creative role of the drama teacher. These teacher artists “reflect on how the Arts operate as revelations of the world. They recognise that children need to be supported in their engagement with an artwork and that the teacher should be an active conspirator, if you like – one who assists the shaping and probing of the children’s responses” (Taylor, 2000, p. 126). This ‘conspiracy’ occurs within the aesthetic space which exists in the drama classroom.

The approaches to learning drama in schools are discussed in a 2004 NJ (Drama Australia Journal) article: *Drama in the Pacific Curriculum*, which recognises three significant ways students and teachers engage with drama. These are:

- 1) learning in drama, where learning is incidental and develops personal qualities such as self-esteem and communication skills;

2) learning through drama where it is a tool for learning in other areas;

3) learning about drama through forming, presenting and responding.

This final approach provides the opportunity to develop aesthetic understanding (Pascoe, 2004, pp. 122 - 123). The Queensland 1-10 Drama Syllabus (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002) insists that forming, presenting and responding are present in each drama lesson. This thesis acknowledges the value of each of these components of a drama curriculum and suggests that by attending to each of these, an aesthetic experience is made possible.

Havell (1987) commends the place of drama as a learning medium and suggests that this had been the primary focus in the field at the time of writing. Whilst not wanting to discourage the continued use of drama methodology in other subject areas, he is adamant that drama is most beneficial when the advantages of drama as an art form are employed. Consequently, he has called for educators to develop drama within the aesthetic domain (p. 175). John O'Toole concurs when saying, "in any kind of drama education, not only does taking care of the art form produce better art, it actually produces better learning – and not just better learning about art" (O'Toole, 1998, p. 12). O'Toole further posits that by not attending to the aesthetic, learning is actually impeded. Cecily O'Neill's (1995) work in the area of process drama has been pivotal in the development of learning through the art form and aesthetic experiences.

Process Drama

As the name implies, process drama is concerned with the development of the drama as a whole, not just the product or performance at the end of a period of rehearsal. Process

drama involves creating, presenting and reflecting upon the drama as it progresses. In process drama no script is used and the whole group is involved in an extended series of improvised scenes, which develop in an unpredictable way to create what O'Neill terms a 'drama world'. There is no separate audience in this imagined world, rather the participants have the dual roles of actors and spectators (O'Neill, 1995, pp. xvi-xvii). It is within the drama world that the aesthetic experience takes place.

O'Neill's links to Heathcote and Bolton are never clearer than in her use of the teacher in role strategy. This is not a subversive or manipulative role because the teacher, as one of the players, is able to move the story along while still bound by the rules of the drama, just like everyone else. "This kind of leader will invite participants into the imagined world and support and protect them within it" (O'Neill, 1995, p. 62). O'Neill likens a teacher aiming to lead the children into an imagined world, to a guide with an incomplete map, in no particular hurry to reach the destination. Indeed they are not even sure what the destination is. It is the journey which is important. It is the journey that is the destination (O'Neill, 1995, p. 67).

O'Neill states that the aesthetic experience is encouraged by attention to the art form and many dramatic forms are employed in process drama. "These forms include role taking and role building, the 'key strategy' of teacher in role, the means of being inside and outside the action, and distance and reflection" (O'Neill, 1995, p. xviii). The participants in the drama must surrender to these forms if the aesthetic is to be encountered.

The teacher takes a role in the drama, just as the children do. This role playing is not ‘acting’ in the melodramatic sense of the word but a simple projection “into a variety of fictional situations by pretending to be someone or something other than one’s self” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 78). As the drama proceeds, the participants develop these roles as they interact with and observe others, building on each experience. This is a chance for students to ‘walk in the shoes’ of others, to experiment with behaviour and responses, to try out new ways of being.

While there are no scripts, character profiles or plot synopses in process drama, a pretext is often used as a springboard for ideas. “The dramatic world may be activated by a word, a gesture, a location, a story, an idea, an object or an image, as well as by a character or a play script” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 19). O’Neill refers to these starting points as *pretexts* and credits them with providing information on location, roles and situations as well as indicating possible future action (O’Neill, 1995, pp. 22 - 23). They are a point of departure for the drama and should be engaging and motivate the participants to want to enter the drama world which it provokes.

An appropriate pretext is simple and provides minimal information. Rather it is a stimulus which demands some action. It provides a common experience which binds the group together as it continues through the drama. “An effective starting point will launch the dramatic world in such a way that the participants can identify their roles and responsibilities and begin to build the dramatic world together as rapidly as possible” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 20).

David Booth (1994) has developed a form of process drama which he calls story drama.

A story is chosen as a pretext and after sharing the story, the group embarks on its journey of discovery. Again, where the journey will lead is not clear at the outset and Booth delights in “the twists and turns on the way” (Booth, 1994, p. 61). The story is merely the starting point that provides the framework for the drama. “The story provides, in effect, a structuring framework without becoming a narrative straightjacket, and the activities include both exploration and transformation” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 42).

O’Neill recommends providing opportunities for reflection, discussion and response both in and out of role. Because of the duality of the roles of participants in process drama, periods as spectator offer time for contemplation. Similarly, through the teacher in role questioning them, the children as actors, can be helped to reflect on the drama. O’Neill also suggests tableau or freeze frame as a convention which aids reflection both as actor and spectator by suspending time and allowing space for a response (O’Neill, 1995, pp. 126 - 127). These opportunities for critical reflection are doors into the aesthetic experience.

O’Neill cautions that “the mere fact of setting up such a task, however, will not necessarily result in reflection or elaboration. Without encouragement and the deliberate adoption of an interpretative stance, the task will not modify or extend the experience of the drama” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 130). Without consciously seeking and guiding the participants towards the aesthetic, they may not experience it.

O'Neill continually warns against controlling the drama too much, insisting that if this occurs the benefits of process drama are lessened. However she also recognises that "in both theatre and education, improvised dramatic activities are most likely to be employed in the service of some extrinsic purpose, but the fact that the teacher or leader has a particular instrumental aim in mind will not necessarily preclude the growth of a dramatic world" (O'Neill, 1995, p. 4). This thesis suggests that elements of process drama can be very successfully integrated into religious education generally and in sacramental preparation in particular because of the importance of experiential, aesthetic and cognitive learning integral in each of these fields.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Integration of the Arts and Religious Education

The call for the integration of the Arts and religion is coming from many quarters (Harris, 1987; Lee, 1995; Groome, 1998; Fleischer, 2000; Osmer, 2000; Goldberg, 2001). Pope John Paul II made the extravagant claim that the "in order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art" (John Paul II, 1999, p. 7). John Paul referred to the role art has played throughout the history of the church in evoking an "intuition of the mystery" (p. 11) which he explains as the experience of God. Whilst admitting to a separation of faith and art in the present day, he called upon artists to resurrect the tradition of art "as a kind of bridge to religious experience" (John Paul II, 1999, p. 13).

He accepts that artists already recognise that whatever bridge they may be able to build with the finished product of their art, it "is no more than a glimmer of the splendour which

flared for a moment before the eyes of their spirit” during the process of creation (John Paul II, 1999, p. 7). This pope, who had a background in drama in his youth, acknowledged the power of the aesthetic experience in making art. Process drama, as a genuine art form, presents itself as a bridge into the aesthetic. “It is therefore a wholly valid approach to the realm of faith, which gives human experience its ultimate meaning” (John Paul II, 1999, p. 8).

The Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, John Bathersby, also recommends integration of religion and the Arts recognising the benefits in both fields.

It is no wonder therefore that the Church, down
through the long centuries of history, has been
a strong promoter of beauty and truth in the Arts.
What I am sure about is that the Arts sit very
comfortably with religion, the two being easily
integrated and capable of providing mutual strength
to each other. (Opening Arts Centre, Marist College Ashgrove, 2005)

Brown (1975) suggested “the close logical links between the realms of aesthetics and religion demand that these be complementary studies” (p. 146). This theme is supported by Marian de Souza (2005) who proposed that religious education programmes employ strategies which “balance cognitive and affective learning” so that both the inner and outer lives of the student are addressed (p. 66). de Souza believes that the aim of religious education is transformational learning and to achieve it, students must be able to access these dual lives and reflect inwardly on what they have heard or experienced.

Those involved in aesthetic education also believe that we live simultaneously in two worlds: an inner world and an outer world (Hughes, in Abbs, 1989b; Abbs, 1989b) and that it is imperative that we attend to both. However, Hughes warns that we have been trained not to look inwards because “the educational tendencies of the last 300 years, and especially of the last fifty, corresponding to the rising prestige of scientific objectivity and the lowering prestige of religious awareness, have combined to make it so” (Hughes, 1989, p. 168).

He points out that historically the inner world was given passage to the outer world through religion but as objectivity took over from religion, the inner world was forced to retire. Humans disconnected from that world only to find that it would not be silenced, so now we are searching for a way to connect with our inner selves again. Not surprisingly, “children are most sensitive to the inner world, because they are the least conditioned by scientific objectivity to life” (Hughes, 1989, p. 170). By employing methods which offer an aesthetic experience, such as educational drama, in the religious education of children, this connection to their inner world may be realised.

Hughes suggests that our struggle is in allowing these two interdependent worlds to coexist. “What we need, evidently, is a faculty that embraces both worlds simultaneously...that keeps faith, as Goethe says, with the world of things and the world of spirits equally. This really is the imagination” (Hughes, 1989, p. 171).

Religious Imagination

Greeley (1981) who writes particularly with Catholicism in mind and comes from a social science viewpoint rather than a theological stance, believes that the development of a religious imagination is a vital step in being socialised into the church. He explains that the imagination processes new information with experience and then sends it to the intellect. Similarly, Hughes advocates training the imagination because it “is the control panel for everything we think and do, so it ought to be education’s first concern” (Hughes, 1989, p. 166). Eisner (2002) recognises the important part the Arts have to play in this education. “One important feature of the Arts is that they provide not only permission but also encouragement to use one’s imagination as a source of content” (p. 82).

Greeley (1981) emphatically calls for a return to the teaching methods of the early church which relied on imagination. “The church seems to have overestimated the importance of propositional instruction and notably underestimated the importance of storytelling in the development of the religious imagination through relationships in which loving goodness is revealed and experienced” (Greeley, 1981, p. 237).

Based on his research, Greeley claims that “the religious picture and the religious experience, are much more likely to produce desirable religious attitudes and behaviours than are the appropriate and proper doctrinal propositions” (Greeley, 1981, p. 41). He believes that because of the historical use of symbols such as candles, medals, stained glass and holy water in the rituals and education of Catholics, those from this faith tradition make particular use of the religious imagination and have many opportunities to call upon it. “The Catholic imagination is, namely, one that views the world and all that is

in it as enchanted, haunted by the Holy Spirit and the presence of grace” (Greeley 2000, p. 184). Furthermore, he states that the primary element of the Catholic imagination is sacramentality, which he describes as ‘the presence of God in all creation’ (Greeley, 2000, p. 24).

Sacramental Imagination

Groome (1998) supports this view, believing that by nurturing the aesthetic sense and the imagination of learners we are also able to foster their sacramental consciousness (p. 167). He offers the Arts as effective agents by which this is achieved. “As students are introduced to the Arts, when they engage their own creativity and aesthetic ability, they are most likely to discover the sacramentality of the world, finding in it and themselves the work of the Creator” (Groome, 1998, pp. 158 - 159).

While there are those who favour a more rational approach to religious education which is not faith-dependent (Crawford & Rossiter, 1985; Smart, 1991), others such as Groome (1998); Greeley (2000); Liddy (2002) and de Souza (2005), recognise that opportunities for spiritual and faith development are an important part of any Religious Education programme. The particular subset of Religious Education which is relevant to this discussion is that of sacramental preparation within the Catholic school. While recognising the plurality which exists in these classrooms and the consequent difficulties associated with enfaithment, it is nevertheless vital to offer opportunities for the development of the sacramental imagination which may lead to an exploration of their spirituality and a deepening of faith in the students. Without this opportunity, effective sacramental preparation would be compromised.

In sum, good sacramental theology insists that there is nothing automatic or mechanical about the effectiveness of sacraments. Catholic tradition holds that although the seven liturgical sacraments are always effective from God's side, they demand a human response of personal faith and effort to live their grace (Groome, 1998, p. 143).

To assist children in making this response, de Souza (2004) suggests that teachers themselves must become more reflective and intuitive as they develop their own spirituality to more readily recognise and address the spirituality of their students (p. 28). Hyde (2005) warns that "not all teachers of religious education may be equipped professionally and/or personally for nurturing spirituality in this way" (Hyde, 2005, p. 61) and calls for the personal and professional formation of teachers. Similarly, Liddy (1999) suggests that a teacher's own spirituality impacts on how and what they teach. She claims "it would seem critically important, imperative in fact, that ways were found to enable teachers, in a free and empowering manner, to reflect on the spirituality they bring to religion teaching" (p. 36). She recommends that this exploration of teachers' spirituality is explicitly included in both pre-service and in-service training of religious education teachers.

Metaphor and Parable

In developing a religious or sacramental imagination, several writers (Moran, 1983; Harris, 1987; Abbs, 1989a; Greene, 1999; Greeley, 2000; Eisner, 2002) insist on the

benefits of providing opportunities for children and adults to think metaphorically. These writers suggest that the metaphors which we employ are essential to learning and knowing. Moran (1983) claims “religious literature is especially rich in metaphor because the attempt to grasp the human relation to what is ultimate necessarily strains at the limits of knowledge” (p. 138). Abbs (1989a), too, suggests that metaphor states truths in a way that is not possible otherwise, by calling upon the experiences of both our inner and outer worlds (p. 142).

Moran includes pun, paradox and parable in the palette of artistic stories which can “prepare the mind for the one that cannot be named” (Moran, 1983, p. 137). Parables have long been associated with religious education, including Jesus himself. Parables, with their hidden message, use of metaphor and symbols present themselves as a perfect tool in religious education which strives for the freedom in learning as described by Friere. Moran (1983) points out that parables do not provide one simple answer to any problem but rather

Starting from simple experience of ordinary life,
parable awakens the imagination by twisting back
on the premises we brought to the story...Parable,
like myth, features a duality of principles. Rational
logic turns out to be incapable of giving a solution.
It is true that in much of the history of Christianity,
parables were thought to be moralistic tales with
instructions to behave in one way. But a contemporary
understanding of the parables sees them as asking

us to live within the tension of the story itself (p. 154).

Prior (2001), writing about participatory drama claims, “as O’Toole puts it, tension is the feeling component of the aesthetic dimension within the drama” (p. 24). O’Neill (1995) suggests that in the space where tension builds and before the final resolution, participants are most likely to reflect on and make connections to their own lives. She goes on to say that the story provides “a perspective, an aesthetic distance from which the students are safe to confront...the deepest concerns of their own lives” (p. 4). The deep concerns of Religious Education are “the enduring religious questions of wherefrom, whereto, and why” (Harris and Moran, 1998, p. 31). A process drama which uses a parable as a pretext, offers the opportunity of an aesthetic experience where these questions may be encountered and explored, and knowing constructed.

SUMMARY

This chapter has traced the relationship of art, particularly drama and religious education and suggests that a point of connection between the two is made in an aesthetic experience. Contemporary models of religious education seek to employ experiential methods of teaching and learning which have a strong educational focus and honour religious freedom in the learner. Educational drama offers a context in which this may take place by repairing the dichotomy between cognitive and affective knowing. This research aims to explore the experiences of one primary school class as drama is used in their sacramental preparation. The voices of the participants will provide an authentic story of the encounter. The following chapter will discuss the research design and process which enabled the investigation to place.

Chapter 3

Research and Design Process

They will shine in the sky to give light

Identifying An Epistemology

At the heart of this research is discovering how a Year Three class experience drama as a learning and teaching method in religious education, particularly in the area of sacramental preparation.

The arts have had a long association with the Catholic Church in both religious celebration and religious knowing and present as a unique instrument to enhance both. However, the advantage of this union has not always been realised in religious education. By using drama methodology to help prepare children to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist, this research aims to explore the possibility of using drama to return the arts to a central pedagogical position within religious education.

The research is informed by educational theories pertaining particularly to drama and religious education and is based on the following assumptions:

- Arts education and religious education both rely on aesthetic knowing to construct meaning (Harris, 1987). Drama as a strand of arts education, offers particular opportunities for aesthetic knowing (O'Neill, 1995). Religious knowing is a form of aesthetic knowing (Groome, 1980).

- Drama and Religious Education both advocate learning which is experiential, reflective and allows for personal construction of meaning (McLean, 1996, Grimmitt, 2000).
- The imagination is important as a processor of experiences and may lead to religious knowing (Greeley, 1981) and deepening of spirituality (de Souza, 2005).
- Children benefit from experiences in generic religious concepts before being introduced to religious language and ritual (Tacey, 2003; Grajczonek, 2001)
- There are renewed calls to return the arts to a central pedagogical position within religious education (John Paul II, 1999; Goldburg, 2001) and to put an end to the dichotomy between the affective and rational modes of learning by giving preference to an holistic way of knowing (Groome, 1998; Grimmitt, 2000)

The research was driven by the main question and the sub-questions which arose from it.

What are the experiences of one co-educational primary religious education class when drama is used as a teaching method in their sacramental preparation?

1. Does using educational drama to prepare children for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion enhance their knowledge and understanding in this area?
2. Is process drama effective as an aid to learning about the sacraments?
3. How did the classroom teacher view educational drama as a tool in sacramental preparation?

Choosing a Paradigm

The research questions were valuable guides in the search for an appropriate design for this project. To uncover as much as possible about the experiences of a drama class preparing to receive the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation, decisions needed to be made about the sort of data to be collected and where this data might be found. It was clear that the class needed to be studied in their natural setting and playing an active role in the lesson as the teacher afforded me first-hand experience of the drama lesson. Giving the children opportunities to voice how they felt and what they thought when drama was used to assist in their sacramental preparation was seen to be essential. The re-telling of their stories and interpreting what they might mean was an exciting prospect as the research journey was planned. After reading the literature, case study was chosen as a tool to guide the work of this research. Furthermore, by using ethnographic techniques throughout, the approach could be a descriptive, interpretative case study.

Case Study

Wiersma (2000) describes case study as “a detailed examination of something” (p. 206). Smith broadens the description by suggesting that ‘something’ is ‘a bounded system’ (in Stake, 1995, p. 2), while Stake himself argues that “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). I believed that the complexities of a single class who were about to start their sacramental preparation, provided me with a perfect case to study.

The group was already ‘bounded’ in that they shared a classroom, a teacher and each day of the school week. I too, was included in the ‘bounding’ because the class knew me as

their drama teacher. We were a natural group who were accustomed to working and playing together. The purpose of the research was to conduct a naturalistic study of these children involved in a drama lesson as a prelude to sacramental preparation.

Additional influence came from Yin's comment suggesting that "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). Furthermore, Yin offers three categories of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. A descriptive case study appealed, particularly one which relied on 'thick description' of the whole context so that the reader may be able to recognise fragments of her or his own experience. The 'how' of the questions would be best answered by using a descriptive case study method, incorporating ethnographic techniques.

By situating the study in the real-life context of a classroom, the children's experience of the lesson and its impact on further understandings was difficult to control. In teaching the lesson, I would guide the learning but it would be the children themselves who would be responsible for their own experience of it.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain why case study is the preferred option for naturalistic enquirers by making these points:

- Case study is better suited to emic enquiry where the reconstruction of the *respondent's constructions* are paramount

- Case study builds on the reader's tacit knowledge and provides a '*vicarious*' experience as if s/he was actually there
- Case study provides adequate 'thick description' for the reader to apply the knowledge in a different setting through recognising similarities
- Case study communicates contextual information that is grounded in a particular setting (pp. 359 - 360).

Case study seems to walk hand in hand with ethnography when the latter is described as:

An approach to social research based on the first-hand experience of social action within a discrete location, in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of those who inhabit that location (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 16).

Similarly, in both ethnography and case study data, is collected through observation, interviews and documents. So whilst this was not strictly a true ethnographic study, several ethnographic techniques were used throughout.

Ethnography

Ethnography literally means 'writing about people'. This writing only takes place after rigorous data collection which has as its focus the participants' view, naturalism, holism and the use of a variety of collection methods (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Burns, 1996).

“Put into the context of education, we can define ethnographic research as the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts” (Wiersma, 2000, p. 15). Wiersma expands on this by stating that ethnography relies on observation, description and interpretation, takes place in a natural setting, aims to take a holistic view of the case and provides a catalyst for theory to develop.

My research was grounded in discovering how the participants perceived their experience of sacramental preparation through dramatic action. Therefore data collection needed to take place in the natural setting of a classroom. I was their usual drama teacher, so my involvement as teacher on this occasion further added to the naturalism. However, personal involvement could also cause objectivity problems in analysing and selecting data. Ethnographers “do not seek to manipulate and control what goes on in these settings but rather to minimise their own impact on events” (Burns, 1996, p. 301). Similarly, my own praxis as both a drama and religious educator is steeped in theories of education which favour critical, self-reflective knowing on the part of the learner over teacher-directed learning. Therefore, the non-manipulative model of the ethnographer appealed.

Ethnographic techniques have been employed by other researchers in religious education (Liddy, 1999; Jackson, 2000; Hyde, 2005) and educational drama (McDonald, 1994; Mienczakowski, 1994; O’Mara, 1995; McLean, 1995 all in Taylor, 1996). The work of Lee (1997), Donelan (2002) and Sanders (2003) shows that ethnography is valuable when researching drama because as Donelan claims “nothing gets you closer” (in Sanders, 2003, p. 102).

Ethnography like drama is based on the human capacity to empathise, to imaginatively project into a situation, to identify with another's point of view: Writers about ethnography describe the process of conducting participant observation in terms that are familiar to us as drama educators (Donelan, 1992 in Sanders, 2003, pp. 102 - 103).

It is important when using ethnographic techniques to see the case which is being studied as part of a wider context, that is to take a holistic view. There can be no understanding of the case without understanding the setting and the influences affecting it. This class of Year Three children and their teacher is also part of a school and an education system, not to mention their families and social cultures. While a detailed discussion of these is outside the scope of this thesis, it is acknowledged that they will have an influence on the participants and are discussed later in the chapter.

Ethnographic practices included interviews, observation, examination of documents, field notes, memos and video/audio recording to collect data. By employing these multiple techniques, rich description of the phenomena is possible and the trustworthiness of the study is strengthened. Triangulation of the data is imperative in any qualitative project to maintain reliability.

Wolcott (1997) suggests four strategies integral to ethnography:

- experiencing (observation)
- enquiring (interviews, questions)

- examining (field notes, video, audio)
- reporting (p. 334).

Each of these helped point the way forward as I proceeded with my investigation and is discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

Arts-based Research

In designing this study I was excited by Barone and Eisner's (1997) discussion of arts-based research. They claim that "arts-based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing" (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 73) and that case studies "are almost always the focus of artistically based inquiry" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 84).

They list the characteristics of art-based inquiry as:

- The creation of a virtual reality where the reader is able to vicariously experience the studied case;
- Containing an ambiguity so that the reader may provide his or her own answers;
- Using language that is contextualized, expressive and vernacular so that it is easily accessible to the reader;
- Promoting empathy;
- Putting forward the thoughts of the participants and the researcher;
- Uses an aesthetic format to tell the story rather than a traditional style of arranging the report (Barone & Eisner, 1997, pp.73 - 78).

Barone and Eisner offer the concept of a continuum of reporting style which ranges from scientific reports at one end to poetic, storied texts at the other. On this continuum, the narrative storytelling style which I wanted to use would be placed closer to the arts-based end. “The aim in these studies is to entice the reader to re-conceptualize the educational process through intimate disclosures from the lives of individual educators and students” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 82). That is, by listening to the stories of the participants, the reader may come to share the experience, perhaps recognise similarities in their own life, and so be changed by it. In this way the aim of educational research to improve educational policy and practice may be realised.

The concerns with this approach involve reliability, validity and generalization. However, Barone and Eisner (1997) point out these terms are born of statistical research and question their appropriateness in narrative inquiry (p. 85).

The utility, validity, or reliability of a writer’s portrayal of a social scene is not to be appraised by the extent to which others writing independently about the same scene produce an identical portrayal, but rather by whether the portrayals created by different individuals help us to see things we hadn’t noticed before” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 89).

Arts-based research is a genre of inquiry, not just of writing. It is both process and product. Gathering empirical data, describing it richly and interpreting it by ‘imaginative extrapolation’ helps both writer and reader to make decisions about what is done with what is seen, heard and felt.

The Context

In choosing to do a naturalistic study of the experiences of a class using drama as part of their sacramental preparation, it was clear that I “must work in settings where behaviour occurs naturally” (LeCompte & Preissle 1993, p. 95). The research occurred in a class situation with which they were familiar and felt relaxed. Furthermore, it seemed important that a ‘typical’ class was chosen because “if it wasn’t, the study lacks external validity in that the findings cannot be generalised to another setting” (Burns, 1996, p. 307). Whilst the main focus was the experience of this unique case, it was hoped that this would stimulate reflection on the reader’s own practice.

Spradley (1980) suggests five criteria for selecting a social setting for participant observation:

- Simplicity
- Accessibility
- Unobtrusiveness
- Permissibleness
- Frequently recurring activities (p. 52).

With these criteria in mind, I chose a mixed gender, Year Three class at a local Catholic school as the case to be studied. I already had access to the class as their drama teacher and considered it would be reasonably simple to negotiate access to them for the research. The observation of the specific drama lesson central to the study was not a frequently recurring activity but the design of the study required a single lesson. This is discussed more fully elsewhere in this chapter.

The School

The children and teacher who were participants in the study attended a Catholic Primary school which is part of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Brisbane Catholic Education maintains the overarching responsibility for the school but the school principal makes decisions concerning day-to-day operations. Therefore in gaining access to the school, my first contact was with the principal.

At the time, I was employed at the school as a part-time drama specialist, so was well known to the principal. The principal was very keen for me to be able to proceed with data collection at the school and offered any support which was needed. This was given in the form of access to the class and teaching space, and rooms and times made available for interviews. I had a personal friendship with one of the Year Three teachers and she was also very willing to be involved. I counted myself very fortunate to have found the liaison personnel so willing to allow me entry to the site. Similarly, the children seemed to enjoy their weekly drama lesson and they reacted positively when they were told we would be doing a whole day of drama together.

The school actively encourages participation in the arts through specialist programmes in Music (Years P-7) and Drama (Years 3 & 4) and co-curricula activities including String Ensembles, Concert Bands, Choirs, Speech & Drama and an annual Art Show. This is supplemented by regular Arts Council performances. It is clear that the arts and artists are valued by the children, staff and parents of this school by the high level of involvement in activities, especially those that are optional and often have a fee attached. Most of these programmes are running at capacity, some with waiting lists and attendance at

performances is high. Classroom teachers support the arts by allowing the children to attend these private lessons in class time.

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) encourages connectedness across Key Learning Areas (KLAs). This study connects Religious Education and the drama strand of the Arts syllabus. BCE also encourages links between school and parish. This study provides valuable support of the parish based sacramental preparation programme.

Consent and Ethics

I acknowledge the importance of high ethical practice in research and so followed recommended procedures meticulously. Because I was working with children, consent letters using the approved format (see Appendix A), were sent to parents detailing the project and their child's involvement in it. It was stressed that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. All parents signed the form and gave permission for their child's involvement. Similarly, ethics clearance was applied for and received from the Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (ACU). This application was completed on the approved form (see Appendix B).

METHODOLOGY

Participant Observation

The ethnographic approach invites researchers to become more involved and to experience through several senses rather than remain an interested onlooker (Wolcott, 1997, p. 336).

Wolcott's invitation to experience through several senses appealed strongly and appeared imperative in my role of researcher as instrument of data collection, if a wide range of data was to be gathered. To get a clear view of what was taking place in the drama classroom, I wanted to get as close as possible to the action. Taking the role of a participant in the action would be as close as I could get. I would become a part of the drama by teaching the lesson and in so doing enjoy a truly multi-sensual experience. This would afford me an insider's or emic view of what was happening.

However, the term 'participant observer' brought with it some confusion. If I was actively participating in the lesson by co-creating the drama, did that allow for 'observation'? Wolcott (1997) clarifies this dilemma by naming three types of participant observer: the active participant, the privileged, active observer and the passive observer (p. 336). Ann McCormack Steinmetz (1991) describes these roles further: the active participant has an active job to do apart from the research, the privileged observer is known and trusted and has easy access and the passive observer does not have any role in the group other than that of researcher (in Ely, p. 45).

By teaching the lesson, I would become an active participant, a comfortable role for a drama teacher familiar with employing the teacher-in-role strategy in classes. Of course it also presented some problems. Wolcott, describing his own 1967 research says that "occupying a dual role as teacher and researcher in a cross-cultural classroom made a genuine participant observer study possible but also diverted from my research effort the energy that full-time teaching demands" (Wolcott, 1997, p. 336). In fact, there were times when I was so engrossed in the lesson that the research was far from my mind.

I heeded Spradley's (1980) "word of caution: the more you know about a situation as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer. The *less* familiar you are with a social situation, the *more* you are able to see the tacit cultural rules at work" (pp. 61 - 62). I was aware that my familiarity with the case was a possible source of bias and consciously worked to monitor it by regular peer checking and the collection of a variety of data.

Spradley (1980) refers to a 'wide-angled lens' approach to gathering information as a participant observer because "a wide observational focus leads to some of the most important data" (p. 56). This involves description of the context, interactions, and atmosphere as well as the activity of the actors. While this was not possible at the time of observation, video recordings provided me with a literal 'wide-angled lens' and allowed me to make field notes after the event. In this way I was able to observe activity which took place outside my direct line of sight or area of involvement at any given time.

During the small group questioning, my role was more of the privileged observer. I was trusted and well known by the children. The conversation flowed easily between us. I also had a good relationship with the teacher and had free access to the children when I needed them.

Having said that, I am also aware of the effect I may have had by participating. Any observer, in whatever role, will change the dynamics of the context. By taking the role of teacher, I think the negative affect was lessened because I was a natural participant in the context of the drama class.

I was concerned that one day of interaction and observation of the class may not have been long enough to gain the data required. However, this was the planned teaching time and therefore was all that was available to me. Wolcott (1997) says “one is advised to stay long enough to see a full cycle of activity” (p. 332). The one teaching day was a full cycle of activity and my question was concerned with the experiences of the children on this one day. I accepted this limitation as part of the bounding of the case.

The longer a participant observer is able to spend in the field (prolonged engagement), the less likely it is that the other participants will say and do the things they think are expected of them. “When field residence extends over a long time, people forget that the fieldworker is studying them and begin to treat the researcher as a complete participant” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 94). Whilst the observation of the preparation day may not be classed as ‘prolonged’, we had shared approximately six drama lessons prior to this day thus lessening the possibility of the children ‘performing’ for me. I was the ‘normal’ drama teacher for this class. If their classroom teacher had taken the lesson and I observed, the children would have found this unusual and it may have been more likely to affect their behaviour.

Interviews

I wanted the interviews to be as relaxed and informal as possible, along the lines of Lofland’s (1971) ‘guided conversations’ where the participants would each “speak freely and in his (*sic*) own terms” (Lofland, 1971, p. 84). The interviews with the children were conducted on three separate occasions. We first met before the drama day and then soon after the children received the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation.

Originally, these were the only planned interview sessions as I believed I would collect the necessary data during them. However, as analysis was ongoing from the beginning of the study, it became clear after my second meeting with the children, that I did not have enough information about their attitudes to the drama day in particular. So a third interview session was carried out. Each interview session was video recorded.

I favoured group interviews because “the interaction among the interview subjects often leads to spontaneous and emotional statements about the topic being discussed” (Kvale 1996, p. 101). Glesne & Peshkin (1992) suggest “some young people need company to be emboldened to talk; and some topics are better discussed by a small group of people who know one another” (pp. 63 - 64). Lofland (1971) recommends group interviews because they allow time for reflection as the pressure of having to talk all the time is relieved, comments from one participant can evoke a memory in another and discussion is stimulated when participants both agree and disagree with each other (Lofland, 1971, p. 88).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of their mixture of informal and formal techniques. “This is the most important form of interviewing in case study research. Well done, it can be the richest single source of data” (Gillham, 2000, p. 65). A series of questions (see Appendix C) was devised as a starting point for the conversations but the children were free to answer in their own way and to tell their own story. I was able to compare the responses of the children and at the same time allow them to have their own voice.

Because the children knew me, they were comfortable in the interview situation. We had already developed a rapport. The interviews were held in rooms which were familiar to the children, thus putting them further at ease. Watts and Ebbutt (in Cohen & Manion & Morrison, 1994) believe that the group interview is useful because it encourages conversation which in turn may produce a wide range of responses, particularly where the group knows each other well (p. 287).

In devising the questions, I tried to avoid those which would elicit only 'yes' and 'no' answers, by making them more open-ended. I also avoided leading questions and was conscious of the possibility that the children might be inclined to give me the answers they thought I wanted to hear. I remembered when teaching full time, that children were inclined to give 'caring and sharing' answers when asked 'religious' questions. I hoped my skill and experience as a teacher would be able to cope with this and steer the children to more meaningful responses, however this was not always the case, even with probing.

In the interview situation, I encouraged the children to give honest responses, assuring them there were no right or wrong answers. I really wanted to know what they thought. The children would have been familiar with this because in drama, I had always told them that there were no right or wrong answers as long as you 'have a go.'

I was guided by Harry Wolcott (1990) who cautions us to "talk little, listen a lot" (p. 127). Similarly Bogdan and Biklen (1998) believe that the sign of a good interview is one in which the subjects' lines in the transcript are much longer than the interviewer's. I tried

to be true to this ideal in the interviews, by asking the initial question as succinctly as possible and then interjecting only to clarify a response or to probe for more information.

“Cicourel (1964) cautions that the rapport of ordinary friendship increases the idiosyncrasy of interviews and poses difficulties for establishing reliability and certain kinds of validity” (in LeCompte & Preissle, p. 179). This was pertinent in the interview with Alice, the class teacher and Cari the Assistant Principal Religious Education, because we had personal friendships prior to the research. Mindful of the difference between conversations between friends and a research interview, I was careful not to add my comments to their responses or to agree or disagree with them. My purpose was to hear of their experiences, not to share mine with them (see Appendix D & Appendix E).

Log Book

The log is the place where each qualitative researcher faces self as instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method (McCormack Steinmetz, 1991, p. 69).

I was awakened to the importance of the log by this comment and also McCormack Steinmetz’s reference to ‘the log as the data’ and her claim that if it’s not in the log it can’t be part of the research (p. 70). This would truly be a life-giving document containing field notes, transcripts, observer comments and analytical memos.

Field Notes

While Bogdan and Biklen (1998) point out that strictly speaking all the data collected are field notes, they acknowledge that generally speaking what is commonly referred to as field notes is much narrower (p. 107). The field notes described here are “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen 1998, pp.107 - 108).

Because I was involved as an active participant, I believed it inappropriate to take notes while involved in the lesson. I felt that to do so would have reduced my commitment to the drama and prevented me from fully participating with the children. Similarly in the interviews, I was better able to listen and to ask relevant questions based on previous responses by being truly present, rather writing observations. In this way I was able to listen to the children in particular and probe for clarification or deeper meaning.

However, this does not mean that I was unable to make field notes. I heeded Lofland’s (1971) advice that “the writing of field notes takes *personal discipline* and *time*” (p. 103) by attending to them as soon as possible after each interaction with the children. Each part of the initial drama day and all interviews were both video taped and recorded on a mini-disc recorder. This shows not only my lack of trust of technology (I didn’t want to get to the transcription stage and find the recording did not work) but also enabled me to ‘see’ the children as well as hear them. It also provided the opportunity to check another source when some of the comments were unclear. The video was invaluable in revisiting the expressions and body language of the children and this provided powerful data and

insights to their experience of the day. As Kvale (1996) claims, videotapes retain “access to the *bodily expression* and interpersonal dynamics of the interaction” (p. 293).

The recordings enabled me to go home and watch the sessions again and make my observations at that time. The field notes were completed as soon as possible so that my memory was fresh and were written without discussion with anyone. They were typed onto a computer and stored for later coding and analysis. I discovered “listening to the tape piece by piece forces one to consider, piece by piece...it stimulates analysis” (Lofland, 1971, p. 91) (see Appendix F).

In making the field notes I was able to make comments which were both descriptive and reflective. By describing what I saw, heard and felt as honestly and fully as possible, I was aiming at the ‘thick description’ to which qualitative researchers aspire. It also provided the opportunity for ongoing analysis and interpretation as themes and connections began to emerge from the data. However, Wolcott (1994) warns beginning researchers to err on the side of more description and less interpretation, nevertheless cautioning that a balance is the ideal. These comments proved to be useful when the time for final analysis arrived.

My reflections allowed me the opportunity to ‘bare my soul’. I was able to open up to my own attitudes, fears, frustrations and insights. These comments were clearly marked with an OC (observer’s comments). In this way, some of my biases became obvious and I was able to acknowledge them and if necessary work to keep them from adversely affecting the study.

Analytical Memos

I also used longer memos as a more comprehensive form of reflection. I found these particularly useful immediately after the interviews and their subsequent transcription. “Analytical memos can be thought of as conversations with oneself about what has occurred in the research process, what has been learned, the insights this provides, and the leads these suggest for further action. These memos are written *about* entries in the log, and they themselves become *part* of the log” (McCormack Steinmetz, 1991, p. 80). The memos were almost therapeutic in that they provided an opportunity to muse over the experience. It was similar to journaling in that it was personal and private and for my own information. Like journaling, the memos provided insights and purgings that would not have otherwise been possible (see Appendix G).

Sanders (2003), in her research on boys’ drama education, claimed “my analytic memos enabled me to oversee the process more objectively” (p. 219) and thus assist in the trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, she reflected, “as I read over these memos, I constantly reminded myself that rich knowledge can come unexpectedly from the ordinary and the simple” (Sanders, 2003, p. 226). Therefore she warned researchers against taking their observations for granted and recommended they look carefully at their memos, in order that all the possible revelations are gleaned from them.

Transcripts

I was advised to number the lines of the interviews from the very beginning of the transcription process to make identification easier in the next part of the study. This was indeed invaluable advice. The computer was able to do this automatically as I typed.

Each participant was identified by a name (not their own) and their comments were recorded exactly as stated. Each interview with the children was about twenty minutes long. There were three different sets of interviews and four groups in each session. I also interviewed the class teacher before and after the class received the sacraments. Whilst this was indeed time consuming, I found it provided me with the opportunity to ‘relive’ the interviews and reflect more fully upon them. It also had the added bonus of making me feel like I was progressing on the research journey. Having all those pages of interview transcripts seemed to say that I was on my way.

The video of the children participating in the drama was also transcribed. However in this case, only the relevant sections were included. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that one might “leave out a lot of the material that does not address our concerns. While there are some dangers involved in this shortcut, the risks are often worth the gains” (p. 133). The quality of the recording was also a problem here. Once the children became engrossed in the drama, there was a lot of ‘busy’ noise in the room and so individual voices did not always record clearly. At these times the second recording proved valuable.

Emerging Themes

Around each page of the Log Book, I left large margins so that notes and codes could be entered as needed. As analysis was ongoing, themes emerged from the text. These were informed by reading of literature, discussion with supervisors and intuitive interpretation. The themes which then guided the analysis were:

- Drama process (DP)
- Knowledge (K)

- Attitudes (A)

Data Analysis

'Data analysis' is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157).

I was struck by the volume of data I had and wondered how it would ever be shaped so that it could be presented. I was heartened to learn that data analysis equates to data reduction. So being aware that “coding should not be put off to the end of data gathering. Qualitative research depends heavily on ongoing analysis, and coding is a good device for forcing that analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 64), I began coding as soon as the transcripts were typed.

By placing my questions on a whiteboard in my work space as Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest and referring to them often, I was able to focus more clearly during the analysis. I was looking for answers to these questions through an emergent theory, so a grounded theory approach was adopted to code the data. In this way the results of the project would be grounded in the data.

In the process of ongoing analysis and the search for themes which might emerge from the data, I followed Van Maanen's (1990) “detailed or line-by-line approach” (p. 93)

whereby each line of the transcript was read and reflected upon. I looked for ways in which each response revealed something about the participant's experience.

I was aware of computer programmes such as *The Ethnograph* and *NUDIST* which assist in coding data in qualitative research. However, being cognisant of my computer skills and the time it takes me to learn a new programme, I believed that the 'hands on' option was the better course of action for me. I resonate with the second group of software users when Bogdan and Biklen (1998) warn that "some who have tried swear by them; others swear at them" (p. 186).

So being a non-software user, I used a variation of the cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 186) which has been long used by qualitative researchers, by highlighting parts of the text according to the themes. I would then cut up and collate all the matching themes so that they could be reviewed together. Sanders also used this method to effect in her research in drama education (Lee, 1997; Sanders, 2003).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest, "when working from hard copy it should look used – covered with lines and notations, bent edges, and coffee stains" (p. 170). As I handled the same piece of data many times throughout this long and labour-intensive, hands-on process, I certainly found this to be true. Whilst the paper pieces may have been becoming increasingly messier, it also had the effect of tidying the ideas forming in my mind.

Data Reporting

As work on this project progressed and I came closer to final writing stage, the more I came to see the report as the telling of a dual story. In the beginning, I thought it was to be

a story about the class and their teacher. But as time went by, it became clear to me that I had a story to tell too. This report would be a narrative nestled comfortably within the traditions of ethnography, arts-based research and case study.

Van Maanen (1988) offers three styles of writing which are used in ethnographic reports: realist tales, confessional tales, and impressionist tales. Realist tales are quite matter of fact renditions largely focussing on the participants while confessional tales tend to focus more on the fieldworker. Impressionist tales are more personalised and use a dramatic form. They possess qualities that are both realist and confessional and provide a form for telling the story of both participant and investigator, thus providing both emic and etic perspectives (In Ely, 1991, pp.170 - 171).

Richardson (2003) suggests that we are often told not to write until we know what to say. She goes on to claim that it is in the writing that we begin to know. Writing is not only a product but also a process and ‘knowing’ takes place in both. I found that once I started writing, questions and insights flowed.

Data Trustworthiness

A qualitative researcher pays continuous, recursive, and, we dare say, excruciating attention to being trustworthy (Garner in Ely 1991, p. 156).

The investigator in qualitative research is often referred to as the ‘research instrument’, the tool for collecting the data. As such s/he must be meticulous and transparent in not only gathering but also analysing and interpreting the data.

Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means at the least that the processes of the research are carried out fairly, that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied...it is a personal belief system that shapes the procedures in process (McCormack Steinmetz in Ely 1991, p. 93).

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) refer to ethnographers as ‘methodological omnivores’, when they describe the researcher’s insistence on using various methods to collect data. In this study this criteria was met by triangulating data through a variety of collection methods which included observation, interview, video/audio recordings and documents from the children.

In offering an alternate view of triangulation, Richardson (2003) believing “that there are far more than ‘three sides’ from which to approach the world, (offers the crystal) as the central imagery for ‘validity’ for postmodernist texts, not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object” (p. 517). She prefers this image because the crystal “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angle of approach...What we see depends on our angle of repose” (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 517). Taylor (1996) suggests that ‘crystallisation’ is most effective for drama educators and researchers because they are “forever seeking a new curve on a familiar event” (p. 44).

The lofty aim of the ethnographer is to provide a vicarious experience for the reader, as if they too had been present in the project. The image of the crystal invites both a multi-

faceted telling and interpretation of the story so that the reader is able to draw his or her own conclusions from data which is trustworthy and presented in a crystal-clear format.

Member and Peer Checking

Bill Gillham (2000) suggests the researcher's supervisors are excellent for peer consultation. "Good supervision, in particular, is of paramount importance as research can be a curiously lonely business" (p. 33). These are the people, he suggests, who are experts in the area being studied and/or the research methods being employed. I found this to be so and depended upon these peers to check the work as it progressed.

I also enlisted the support of critical friends who were able to read the various parts of the study as it progressed to assess ease of reading, flow of thought and reliability of interpretation. Several of these were teachers who would be in the target audience for the report in its final stage. These were the people whose vicarious experience of the study might cause them to reflect on their own practice and so their comments were especially precious.

I also valued the feedback from critical friends not in the teaching profession, as it was important to me that the report was easy to read and understand. I did not want jargon or '*dissertationese*' to impede a 'good read'. Therefore, their faithful reading of drafts kept me focussed on these aims.

I was guided by Garner's admission that "because of the nature of my study, I did not verbally check findings with the 5-year-old children whose play styles I documented"

(Garner in Ely 1991, p. 165) and did not review tapes, transcripts or interpretations with the children who participated in the study. However, the classroom teacher provided a valuable source of member checking. She was present for the drama experience and was involved in interviews. She was able to validate her own responses, and advise on and clarify interpretations.

Mindful of Garner's succinct description that "the quest is to make the research project credible, produce results that can be trusted, and establish findings that are, to use Lincoln and Guba's phrase, 'worth paying attention to'" (Garner in Ely, 1991, p. 156), rigour was essential. By taking advantage of various data collection methods, peer support, critical friends and member checking, the trustworthiness of the study was fortified.

Constraints of the Research

Qualitative inquiry is subjective (Stake, 1995, p. 45).

A major constraint of this study was that it involved only one mixed gender class of 25 Year Three children who were involved in sacramental preparation at a systemic Catholic primary school. It is acknowledged that this is a small representation of children preparing to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Communion. The study did not take into account the effect of church attendance of family or child, other religiosity, ethnic background or family influences on the children's experience. Nor did I attempt to assess the effect of the children's spirituality on their experience. This is a most difficult area of study, although I acknowledge it may have had some bearing on the experience.

Stake (1995) indicates that generalising from a single case does not have a strong base. However, he suggests that by providing a vicarious experience for the reader, s/he may make the link between this case and others. “Naturalistic generalisations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake, 1995, p. 85).

The time spent in the field was limited to one full day of teaching and three interview sessions with both the children and the teacher. I acknowledge that this may be seen as ‘Blitzkrieg Ethnography’ (Rist 1980 in McCormack Steinmetz, 1991, p. 51) rather than ‘prolonged engagement’ however the constraints involve the timeframe of the children’s preparation for and reception of the sacraments as the school accommodates dates decided upon by the parish. The lesson was only one part of the school-based programme and was designed with this in mind. The interviews took place over a period of eight months thus providing opportunity for reflection on the part of the participants.

Researcher Bias

The ethnographer is the research instrument.
That instrument, the anthropologist in person –
has been faulted time and time again for being
biased, inattentive, ethnocentric, partial, forgetful.
Overly subject to infection and disease, incapable
of attending to everything at once, simultaneously
too involved and too detached, and the list goes
on and on. Yet, what better instrument could we

ever devise for observing and understanding human behaviour?
(Wolcott, 1997, p. 332).

I acknowledge my own bias. This bias may have been compounded by my close relationship with the participants and the curriculum areas involved.

There is probably no single factor that poses a greater threat to realizing the potential of ethnography than this problem of the researcher who already knows, without having to ever ask, what the ‘native’s point of view’ is – or ought to be. There are unique problems to be faced in doing ethnographic research in settings already familiar and where our subjects are *us* rather than *them*” (Wolcott, 1997, p. 338).

I relied on peer support and feedback from critical friends to make me aware of this problem if it arose.

By remaining in the field for an extended time and collecting large amount of data, personal bias is minimised. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) maintain that “the data that are collected provide a much more detailed rendering of events than even the most creatively prejudiced mind might have imagined prior to the study” (p. 34). Amongst this data is the log book containing detailed field notes with my own reflections clearly marked ‘OC’ (observer’s comments) so that any bias may be clearly recognised. By admitting bias I have tried to limit the effect it has had on the findings and the reader, having been alerted to them is in a better position to make decisions regarding the outcomes.

Timeline

The research took place over a period of three years. After using the first year to review the literature in the fields of educational drama, religious education and qualitative research methods, data collection began with interviewing the two teachers, Alice and Cari. This data provided the basis for the interviews with the children, which took place in February of the second year. Subsequently, the teaching unit was planned and taught in March before the children participated in their classroom and parish sacramental programmes throughout late March, April and early May.

The children and their teacher were re-interviewed in July. Ongoing analysis highlighted the need for a further interview session with the children in October. The remainder of the research period involved data synthesis and analysis, revisiting the literature in light of the emergent findings and the writing and rewriting of the thesis.

SUMMARY

This chapter has investigated the research design and process which would best enable the aim of the project to be achieved. Case study was selected to guide the process and by using ethnographic techniques throughout, the approach would be a descriptive, interpretative case study which relied on multiple sources of data. The case to be studied was a Year three class who were preparing to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. The narrative journey of the research begins in the next chapter as the participants give voice to their experiences. The children and teachers involved share insights and attitudes before, during and after their encounter with drama as a tool in sacramental preparation.

Chapter 4

Analysis

Separate light from darkness

“It is time to start taming the chaos”

(Garner in Ely, 1991, p. 140).

Starting

When the time came to write this chapter, when I could no longer *again* tidy the desk, room or desktop I was heartened to know that this procrastination is common among researchers. However, eventually the story demanded to be told and the empty page was steadily filled with words. It is this chapter that presents the unfolding story of the research process predominately in the form of a narrative. The key questions, as stated previously, guided the analytical process and allowed a clearer and more precise synthesis of the data. The aim here is to share with the reader the voices of the children and their teacher.

This project was born out of my involvement in the sacramental preparation of my own children and many others within the parish in which I worship. Believing that the sacraments are an enormously important part of being Catholic, I have an ongoing commitment to provide the children and their families with opportunities to make the preparation and reception of the sacraments of initiation, especially Confirmation and First Communion, as meaningful as possible.

The parish offers a parish-based programme for Sacramental preparation whereby the children, with at least one parent, meet weekly in small groups of 4-5 children to work through a series of six lessons to assist in preparing their children for the sacraments. I have previously been involved as both Sacramental Co-ordinator for the parish and as a parent/leader within the groups. Through this involvement, it was clear that there were some weaknesses in the programme, which I co-wrote several years ago. My concern was that the programme did not appear to offer the children the opportunity to develop clear cognitive understandings of the concepts involved nor engage them affectively in the preparation or even, perhaps the ceremonies of reception of the sacraments. I questioned the methodology used to teach about the sacraments and felt there may be a more effective way. Because of my background in educational drama and having experienced its power as a learning aid in other areas, I believed that it might provide opportunities for improved outcomes in knowledge, attitudes and understandings in religious education

Although sacramental preparation in the Brisbane Archdiocese takes place in the parish and family context, primary schools support this preparation through their classroom based religious education programmes. In this case, the school provided the context in which the research took place. In this Archdiocese children are eligible to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion from the age of seven. Most children in Queensland schools would be in Year three at this age. The Brisbane Catholic Education module, *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* (2003) lays the foundation for the teaching which takes place in the classroom.

BEFORE THE DRAMA

The Teachers' Voices

Before approaching the children, it was important to understand the present situation in the school. The liaison personnel at the school would provide this insight. These were the Assistant to the Principal: Religious Education (APRE) and the classroom teacher. Each Catholic school in the Brisbane Archdiocese has an APRE as part of the administration team. The person in this role is responsible for the religious education programme in the school and the pastoral care of staff and students. Cari, the APRE at the school involved in the study describes the school's involvement in the sacramental preparation of its students.

OK, as you know we believe that we are a community of people and being part of a community is partnership and I believe the school is in partnership with the parents. I think we have a responsibility to educate the children in their sacramental life and it's an important part of our Year Three curriculum. It is supported by modules that have been developed by the Brisbane Catholic Education Office and we teach these modules in a time sequence that best suits the parish programme, to support the parish programme (Transcript 1, Lines 5-11).

Both the APRE and the classroom teacher, Alice, value and acknowledge the role of the school in the children's preparation.

I think it's very important. It's what we're all about, isn't it? We're Catholics and we go to church and we use our sacraments as much as we can (Alice, Transcript 2, lines 86-88). It's a good part of being a year

three teacher (Alice, Transcript 2, Line 76). I think we have a responsibility to educate the children in their sacramental life and it's an important part of our year three curriculum (Cari, Transcript 1, Lines 7, 8).

The classroom teacher shared my fears about how much the children benefited from the present methods of preparation.

When we do evaluation (assessment task) at the end, they don't seem to be able to distinguish between the Confirmation side and the Eucharist side and the symbols of what each one is (Transcript 2, lines 9-11). They don't seem to understand any of the symbols of Confirmation (Transcript 2, lines 28, 29).

The assessment took the form of a writing task in which the children were asked to connect symbols with the appropriate sacrament. Alice stated that *they don't seem to be able to distinguish the two and a lot of it (sic). Still they went to church and it was long and there was a lot of singing but they, um, and they got presents (Transcript 2, lines 31-33).*

Alice was also uneasy about the learning opportunities for some of the children in some of the groups within the parish setting.

Yeah. Some of the groups find that it's more of a... they do talk about it but more as a party sort of thing. They get together at such-and-such's house and they don't tell me what they did. They just went to that house and they did something for the sacraments, for Reco (sic). A few years ago I know

that the people who did it at night time, the kids just really thought it was like a bar-b-cue – a get together, a social occasion. It's not the programme's fault, it's just the way it's handled with the parents. I think when they get in with their friends, the children just think it's a big family friendly thing (Transcript 2, lines 55-62).

Cari, one of the informants in the field, was keen for the research to take place. It seems that even though she believed the present system worked reasonably well, there was always room for improvement, in *the affective domain (Transcript 1, line 41)*. She believed, *perhaps the only things that may be missing may be that, for some children, is the sense of community that is spoken about in the units, the modules (Transcript 1, Lines 18-20)*.

On several occasions, Cari and I had discussed the possibility of using drama methodology within the religious education programme. Therefore she enthusiastically supported my idea to facilitate a process drama with a year three class preparing to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. The drama unit was designed to provide opportunities for the children to discover and develop understandings within the affective domain. It also aimed to support the school religious education programme where it dealt specifically with sacramental preparation.

The drama lesson was never intended to replace the school module but rather to act as groundwork upon which the teacher would build. This will be described in more detail

later in this chapter. It was important that I ascertained which concepts would offer the most fertile ground from which the school programme would spring.

I requested that Cari *give me some key words or what are some of the key concepts that would be good for me to include* (Anne, Transcript 1, lines 23-4). Cari responded *quickly, I think the first word that comes to mind is 'belonging' (Transcript 1, line 27). I think the children need to have a sense that they belong to a special group (Transcript 1, Lines 29, 30).* This supported her earlier comment about 'sense of community'.

The classroom teacher also picked up on this theme when discussing teaching the modules.

First of all we talk about belonging...belonging in the classroom, belonging at the school, belonging to the Church, belonging to the family or to a sporting group. And then we talk about initiation, what happens when you do belong to those things (Transcript 2, lines 40-43).

Cari identified another key concept as 'spirit'. *We live our lives according to a certain spirit, a certain way, the way of Jesus (Transcript 1, Lines 33, 34).* She explained this further. *And we have to show children what it means to have spirit when it comes to faith and belonging to a family and community (Transcript 1, Lines 57-59).*

Alice believed that the children did not understand 'spirit'. She explained,

I don't think they do. I think it shows through...We do relate it to

the Holy Spirit coming. They always think that this bird flew in and dropped these fires of flame on top of the apostles. I think that's about it. That's probably all they can cope with yet too (Transcript 1, Lines 158-162).

As a teacher of religious education and drama, and an educational researcher, I found this comment challenging. Surely, there must be a way to augment their insight into this most difficult idea. An experience of 'spirit' became a priority within the drama.

'Promises' or commitment was named as an important precept that was difficult to develop. *I know it's not a children's word but in a sense they need to know they are committed to something and they make a promise to live a certain way...And that's what being a member of a Church community is (Cari, Transcript 1, Lines 30-33).* Alice also claimed 'remembering' as a focus when preparing the children for the sacraments *(Transcript 2, Line 91).*

In beginning the research journey, four words seemed to emerge as important: belonging, remembering, spirit and promises. I looked forward to the challenge of exploring these concepts through drama.

Both the APRE and the classroom teacher recognised the value of connecting the cognitive component of sacramental preparation with the aesthetic experience. *I think there is a bigger need than ever to go back to some of that catechetical work that was so dominant in the eighties and to really give the children that affective domain (Cari, Transcript 1, lines 40-42). It (drama) gets the message across a lot easier (Alice, Transcript 2, line 112).*

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Before teaching the drama lesson, I was eager to discover what the children already knew about belonging, promises, remembering and spirit. This would also help contextualise the analysis of their responses after the process was complete. The group interviews served to reveal the children's perspective. By interviewing the children before the intervention of the drama and then again after it, I might be better able to determine the effect of the experience. It was important to do this so I could understand if the drama lesson had enriched understanding in any way. I assumed that they would have some tacit understanding of the concept mentioned and the function of the questions in these interviews would be to provide the opportunity for these to be discovered and articulated. It was with some trepidation that I set off on the road of exploration armed with interview questions and recording equipment.

The Concepts

Belonging

The children described belonging in positive terms. *If you know you belong somewhere, you feel good (Joe, Transcript 3, line 173)*. They seemed to display a strong sense of belonging to family, school and to varying degrees, Church. Sam shares where he feels he belongs. *I belong in our Church family. I belong in a school family and I belong at home in my own family*. Bede gives his reason for not being sure about belonging at Church. *Um I don't know. 'Cause I haven't been since last year (Bede, Transcript 3, Lines 245, 247)*. Attending, or being present at Church was important to Bede's sense of belonging whereas others were happy to go infrequently for special occasions. Shelley explains, *Yes (I belong to a Church) because I go there when my grandpas died and sometimes I go*

there every Christmas and sometimes the whole family goes there to pray for stuff like if somebody dies we just go there to pray for some people (Shelley, Transcript 3, lines 245, 247) and still feel as if they belonged. Emily recognised that You could just be starting to belong to a Church because you don't usually go to that Church on other days but like when it's your Communion, you could belong to the Church (Emily, Transcript 3, lines 230-3).

It seemed that the children's experience of belonging was rich. Therefore the drama would aim to build on these understandings and provide a sense of belonging to a common group which worked together.

Remembering

The children were very concrete in their description of remembering. Many of them talked about pictures, either in their head or in photos. Joe claims *In your brain there's an art gallery and um whenever you see something new you take a pic...your brain takes a picture of it and you have a photo in there and when you see that same thing again, you remember what it is (Joe, Transcript 3, lines 270-273).* Others used the analogy of a cage or chamber to illustrate the process. *It's like a cage in your head and they just get locked in there (Steve, Transcript 5, line 330).* However, Emily saw remembering as an activity of the heart. *You could remember something special by, like taking it into your heart (Emily, Transcript 3, line 285).* As with belonging, remembering was linked to happy times even when the memory was of someone who had died. I was inspired by Tammy's suggestion that remembering was a sign of loyalty *because it shows that they're your best friend (Tammy, Transcript 6, line 241).* It occurred to me that in the context of First

Communion, this could be an important aspect. Jesus' words at the Last Supper, *do this in memory of me* (1 Cor 11:24) demanded a loyalty from his followers. The process drama would offer the opportunity for this sense of fidelity to develop.

Promises

By questioning the children about promises I learnt that there was some confusion between promises and secrets as Emily illustrates, *promises are about keeping secrets and they're secrets only* (Emily, Transcript 3, lines 397-9). Others seemed clearer. Brian insists, *a promise is what you got to keep and...you got to keep on doing it* (claps hands for emphasis)! (Brian, Transcript 6, lines 332, 336). One challenge for the process drama would be to help clarify these misunderstandings.

Spirit

The children clearly associated spirit with death and were able to explain the connection. *Spirit is like when you die your body stays down here. Like just stays where it is and your spirit rises up to heaven* (Sam, Transcript 5, lines 571, 572, 576). The children also believed that each of us has a spirit and Steve seemed to understand the importance of one's own spirit. *You know you have a spirit because you can think and you can talk and if you didn't have a spirit you wouldn't exist* (Steve, Transcript 5, lines 599-600).

To many of these children, spirit was a concept of the heart and they appeared to have a sense of feeling spirit in the heart. Rory explains, *You can feel it. You can feel it in your heart* (Rory, Transcript 4, lines 406, 408). Aaron has a more religious understanding. *I can feel Jesus' (spirit) because he's in your heart*, (Aaron, Transcript 5, lines 640).

By interviewing the children, I learnt that they already had their own considerable understandings of belonging, remembering, promises and spirit, based on their experiences. It was my hope that the process drama would serve to develop these understandings.

Confirmation and First Communion

When asked about their Confirmation and Communion, it seemed that only a few children had much understanding. Bede recognised that *Confirmation means promises* (Bede, Transcript 3, line 75) and other members of his group agreed.

Greer tells us, *well it's like the first time you get Baptised and then you get your Confirmation so you're being accepted again. I don't know why but* (Greer, Transcript 4, lines 122-3). Jackie knew that Communion was *when you get to eat and drink the blood and bread and you're a spirit of God or something* (Jackie, Transcript 4, lines 79-82).

However she did not think there was any difference between Confirmation and Communion.

The question 'Can you tell me about your First Communion and Confirmation?' was greeted largely with blank looks. The children had not yet experienced either sacrament and seemed to have little understanding or anticipation for the celebration or preparation of them. Emily failed to differentiate between Communion and Baptism. *When you have your Communion when you're just born and you get the bath and things and you take your child somewhere, you get a certificate* (Emily, Transcript 3, lines 85-7). There was

also confusion with Reconciliation, which the children were learning about in class at the time.

*Anne What can you tell me about your
First Communion and Confirmation?*

Children Uh, mmm.

Julie That's hard.

Chris We learnt Reconciliation.

(Transcript 5, lines 22-5, 29).

The other children were keen to follow in this familiar territory but were unable to tell me when the reception of the sacraments would take place, what it meant or what was the most important thing about it. I noted in a memo: *I was surprised by how little they knew about the topic. Some had no idea...others had it confused with other sacraments (and) I still got some 'chronic Catholic' answers (Analytic Memo #3).*

This last comment was confirmed when I asked *Why do you do it?* (*Anne, Transcript 5, line 76*) and two children spoke in unison, suggesting *so you can start to be more like Jesus (Transcript 5, lines 79-80)*. Whilst this was not strictly untrue, it seemed to be a generic answer when a 'Jesus' response was considered appropriate. There were many of these during the questioning about First Communion and Confirmation, thus further indicating their lack of prior experience. Brian started in this vein but went on to make a point, which as a drama educator I found very interesting.

*I'm getting ready to be nice to everyone... and
pretending to do it. Getting mummy to... Well I
get ready for it because I **pretend** how you*

*actually **do** the Communion thing...my mum holds
the bread and she puts some juice in the wine
glass and then I take it. I drink it and then take
the bread...You're pretending to be a person like
Jesus. You're actually drinking some wine and some
bread like Jesus and his disciples were actually
doing (Brian, Transcript 6, lines 47-8, 52-3, 55-7, 78, 82-5).*

Brian was able to relate his experience to that of Jesus at the Last Supper. The purpose of the process drama was to give the children an experience of some of the key concepts of the sacraments of initiation. They would then be able to build on that experience as they prepared to receive the sacraments.

THE PROCESS DRAMA

Planning

Planning the process drama presented several challenges. The first was finding a pre-text, as described earlier in this thesis. The role of the pre-text was to introduce the concepts of belonging, remembering, promises and spirit and to act as a springboard into the drama where these concepts would be explored. After searching for some considerable time for a storybook, poem, song or any other story form to meet the criteria, I remembered a tale I had written for the Parish Sacramental Programme many years earlier titled, *Quentin the Quokka*. This story already contained many of the themes I wished to address and would be easy enough to fine tune. Quentin received a non-gender specific name change to Quincy (See Appendix H).

The unit was planned for Year 3 students in Queensland schools by referring to the drama outcomes in the Queensland Arts Syllabus and the BCE unit *The Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* (2003). Because these children had limited experience of drama, activities were designed so that all outcomes at Level 1 may be demonstrated and some at Level 2. The teaching phases were worked around the natural breaks in the school day. The orientating phase would take place before morning tea, enhancing phase between morning tea and lunch and synthesising phase after lunch until the home bell. As the planning progressed, it became clear that there was not a natural place to introduce the words ‘confirmation’ and ‘communion’. The four main themes were emerging with opportunity for exploration but the actual sacramental names were not used. This concerned me until one Sunday at Mass.

In the gospel Matthew was telling us “Jesus spoke to them in nothing but parables” (Matt 13:34). It occurred to me that that was precisely what this drama could do too. The process drama would be a parable for the sacraments of initiation. The children would then have the opportunity to develop their own understandings and draw their own conclusions from the activities in the enhancing and synthesising stages.

By including the parables, the writers of the gospels allowed personal interpretation on the part of the reader. However, Jesus often went on to explain his parables to those who heard them and we also have the benefit of these insights in the gospels. Similarly, the classroom teacher would be able to make connections if necessary, when she taught the BCE module. This unit of work therefore became a parable for Sacramental preparation.

It would provide a foundation so that the builder may build a strong home (Luke 6:46-49)
(See Appendix I).

DRAMA PROCESS

Quincy Day (Appendix I)

In telling the story of the children's experience of the process drama itself, I was guided by the research questions listed earlier. As I sifted through copious pages of data, categories began to emerge which helped to funnel the findings into coherent and manageable insights. These categories will now be discussed by giving voice to the children who participated.

Group Work

One of drama education's strengths is that many of the strategies employed involve working in groups. In this unit, which formed a basis for sacramental preparation, it proved especially valuable because the very act of being in a group helped develop a sense of belonging which is vital in understanding the sacraments of initiation. Greer was very clear about this as she told why she liked group work. *I felt I belonged (Greer, Transcript 14, line 63)*. Shelley shared, *it teaches you understanding and how to work in a group and how to be a team (Shelley, Transcript 13, lines 16, 18-9)*.

This sense of belonging and friendship is an important part of being initiated into a Christian community where members are encouraged to support each other. By being involved in group work, Chris said that she *felt like a better person because everybody was being friends in drama (Chris, Transcript 14, lines 59,61)*. David concurred, *The*

best thing about using drama is 'cos that you get to know people more and be friends with them a lot more (David, Transcript 14, lines 69-70). Carl liked group work because Everyone always gets involved and that's the bit I liked (Carl, Transcript 10, line 184). Emily claimed, we shared everything out. Like we decided in groups what we were going to do (Emily, Transcript 7, lines 82-3).

However Chris shared a very different experience. *Sometimes it was a little hard. Sometimes people forgot that drama is meant to be fun and they just, when we're doing group work, sometimes they just act like they're the boss (Chris, Transcript 14, lines 78-80).* When asked if they were able to work it out when that happens, several children offered solutions. Jasmine summarises the feelings by stating, *you tell them to stop and we work it out together and we work all together (Jasmine, Transcript 14, lines 94-5).*

Joe also noted that conflict resolution or negotiation was called for and seemed to be effective. *Sometimes it can get into big fights or sometimes you can settle it down by making it fair what the other person wants to do and what the other person wants to do (Joe, Transcript 13, lines 162-4).*

Rory saw these conflicts as an opportunity for self-development. *It helps you keep your self-control when you get angry with other people (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 73-4).* He went on to explain how this might be achieved. *When you're trying to do group work and you both want to be the same person or thing in it, yeah agree and give them the bit and you be it (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 206, 207, 209).*

By using group work as a drama strategy, the children were able to develop community-building skills and attitudes. These are essential when preparing to be fully initiated into a Church community where members welcome and sustain each other. Luke believed that drama helped him to become better friends with the other children because *Like if you forgot something you were meant to do like the person next to you can tell you what to do in that bit* (Luke, Transcript 11, lines 127-9). Rory appeared to be developing the ability to ‘walk a mile in the shoes of the other’ when he claimed that group work helped him be a better friend *because you get used to the people working so you can understand them* (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 156-7).

Many of the children claimed that working in a group helped them to know themselves a little better. Joe stated that he learnt *you’re not always the best person in your group if you think you are. Other people might be better and they want to be the leader too. So no-one HAS to be the leader. It made me happy to feel that other people might be better* (Joe, Transcript 13, lines 239-24, 245). Tammy realised that group work helped the group members get to know each *because it made us share how we feel* (Tammy, Transcript 11, line 122).

In a drama unit which aimed to assist children in their preparation to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church, group work appeared to provide rich experiences of the integral concepts of belonging and working together as a team.

Opening a Door to the Aesthetic

What a joy it was to see these little souls give themselves over to their imaginations! Accepting roles with ease, sharing their feelings with honesty and insight, working together for the good of the drama. As a religious educator I was inspired by their seeming aesthetic engagement and as a researcher I felt empowered to see what I knew in my heart to be true, happening before me. These seven and eight year olds were living the theory of aesthetic education which inspired my research. (Analytic Memo #2).

After visiting a drama world on ‘Quincy Day’ the children were able to describe what might have been aesthetic experiences, where their imaginations were engaged and information was garnered from the experience through the senses. Using key drama strategies may have helped to open this door into the aesthetic world.

The children seemed to understand the relationship between drama and imagination.

Drama is about playing around with different people and imagining (Emily, Transcript 12, lines 195-6). You imagine things that aren’t real (Angie, Transcript 13, lines 183-4).

Drama helps you use your imagination (Julie, Transcript 13, line 202). Emily related how the gumleaf tags engaged her imagination.

*Emily It helps you to imagine what you’re doing
as in Quincy Day we had leaves.*

Anne And what did the leaves do?

Emily *Well they helped me to imagine that I was
one of Quincy's friends (Transcript 12, lines 47-50).*

The children related reasons why they thought drama was a good way to learn. Being able to participate in the drama as if it was really happening, was a recurring theme. *It (drama) helped to feel like it was really happening (Tammy, Transcript 11, lines 27-8).* Sometimes the drama strategy used was named. *Um when we did that thing like in a postcard it helped you to use your imagination of what you're trying to imagine to be (Joe, Transcript 7, lines 191-2).*

Being in role appears to have provided some children with entry into the drama world. *Because when you're in role and acting as animals, you feel like you really are an animal and you're starting to know how it feels (Sam, Transcript 14, lines 107-8).* Others simply enjoyed the drama world because they *felt excited because we got to pretend and pretending is fun (Jasmine, Transcript 14, line 105).*

Brian explained how working within a drama world helped him learn about sacramental concepts. *Because it helped you learn about those things (sacramental concepts) by having fun and actually doing what I, like experiencing what actually happens when you do it (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 33-5).* Other children added to the explanation. *Um it helped me learn 'cause so I understand how to keep a promise and how to belong (Greer, Transcript 8, lines 190-1).* The children's learning in each of the main concepts: belonging, remembering, promises and spirit will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

There were some children who did not claim any benefit by being involved in the drama but these were very few.

Anne Does it teach you other things other than acting?

Luke Mmmm, not really (Transcript 12, lines 139-140).

However, during a different interview session, Luke was able to tell me that we learnt *when a friend goes away their spirit is still with us (Luke, Transcript 8, line 54).*

During the Quincy drama, when the animals were trying to find a solution to Penny Platypus' refusal to work with her group, there were some notable comments, reflecting possible aesthetic experiences. When asked *What happens when we close our eyes and think about Quincy?* (Anne, Transcript 16, line 193). Clarice responded, *I can hear Quincy saying, 'you can do it' (Clarice, Transcript 16, line 206).* Many other children joined in and agreed with this (Transcript 16 lines 209, 220) including Penny who explained how she felt. *Quite special and makes me think of my group and what they would do without me. What it would be like (Transcript 16, lines 207-8, 210, 215-8).*

My own observation of Penny further supported this.

Penny was deep in thought, eyes closed and very still.

She had an almost ethereal look about her. At one stage she opened her eyes and looked down at her gumleaf tag, touched it, turned it over, then letting it fall back into place she closed her eyes and frowned. I wondered what battle was raging inside her as she 'listened' to Quincy. (Analytic memo #2).

Penny sustained her role exceptionally well throughout this segment of the drama, as did many of the other children. The conversation revolved around Quincy and the promises they had made to her and to each other. Penny was not easily convinced until she ‘heard’ Quincy. Soon after this she confirmed her promise to be a part of the team and continue rehearsing.

The drama strategy ‘teacher in role’ proved powerful in allowing me to lead the children to critically reflect on the situation. I reflected:

How would I have dealt with the ‘Penny problem’ without being in role myself? It was so natural to refer to Quincy’s plan and remind the children about the promises that had been made when I was also one of them, bound by the same rules. The questions were directed at all of us – and all of us were involved in reflecting upon and solving the problem. I found the tension palpable (Analytic Memo #2).

The drama world provided a space for this class to explore concepts vital to their sacramental preparation. The children’s developing understandings of these concepts will now be discussed.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

This discussion of how using drama to prepare children for the sacraments enhances their knowledge and understanding of Confirmation and Communion, begins with the four

main concepts identified as integral to the process. These are belonging, remembering, spirit and promises.

Belonging

*We were part of the Quincy club.
(Emily, Transcript 7, line 15).*

An aim of the drama was to provide the children with a shared experience of ‘belonging’ so that their understanding of belonging to the church might be extended. One strategy to achieve this, was giving each child a gumleaf tag which they wore on a string around their neck. This was a sign of membership both of the whole cohort and a smaller group of specific animals. During interviews the children shared their feelings about belonging as we discussed the effectiveness of the strategy.

Jasmine described her experience. *We knew we belonged because we had a gumleaf tag and it said what we, what group we belonged to and we were all like a group and we belonged to that group (Jasmine, Transcript 9, lines 100-2).* Tammy too understood the significance of the gum leaves. *Because they (gumleaf tags) made us feel like we were in our groups that we belonged to (Tammy, Transcript 11, lines 67-8).*

Rory claimed that the drama and specifically being in role, helped him to feel that he belonged.

Rory It helps you not feeling left out.

Anne So you felt like you belonged?

Rory *Yeah. Because you can do stuff with
other people as well as using your whole
body to help you with it (Transcript 13, lines 87-92).*

Steve explained that the drama helped him to learn about caring. *If you belong, like it means people care for you (Steve, Transcript 9, line 98).*

Remembering

*If someone goes away you can remember them.
(Rory, Transcript 8, line 94).*

Jesus' words at the last supper, 'Do this in memory of me' called upon his followers to 'eat this bread and drink this wine' so that they would remember him (Luke 22:19-20). The children told how their understanding of remembering grew out of the drama.

One strategy which was employed was the sharing of a special meal as a way of remembering Quincy. In the pre-text story, the night before Quincy was taken away, all the animals had enjoyed together a meal of gum leaves and witchetty grubs. So during the drama all the participants in role as animals, shared a meal of lolly leaves and grubs as a way of remembering Quincy. Tammy made this connection. *We were remembering Quincy. Because they (the lolly leaves and grubs) made us feel like we were part of Quincy (Tammy, Transcript 11, lines 86, 89).*

Brian also made the link and perhaps took it a step further (*Quincy was*) *a remembering symbol because he made, they had gum leaves and witchetty grubs to remember him.*

Those things were like symbols for him (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 311-3). Drama relies on symbol as a door to the aesthetic and Brian's ability to think symbolically strengthens drama's position as a valuable teaching method. Symbol will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Steve and Sam suggested that remembering helped to make the missing person present.

Quincy was um sort of still there, part of it, um belonging to it because they always remembered her so she was always a part of belonging there (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 85-7). They still remembered Quincy. That still she wasn't gone but her spirit was still with them (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 17-8). Similarly, Greer picked up on the connection to spirit. *If somebody goes away you like, you can remember them in spirit (Greer, Transcript 8, line 96).*

Joe saw remembering as a process of the imagination. *They were friends of hers and they remembered her very much and they just imagined that she was right next to them telling the rest of the things to do (Joe, Transcript 7, lines 166-168).* Clarice remained in the affective domain when she claimed that we remember Quincy *from our heart (Transcript 7, line 187).*

Spirit

*The most important thing is when they die or go away,
their spirit is left there with you.
(Written reflection, Quincy Day).*

This reflection indicated the value placed on the learning which occurred in this area. Sam explained the role of the drama in the learning (*Drama helped us to understand that it was, that the spirit was, was with you all the time and that* (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 211-2). Steve shared his understanding of the help received through spirit. *Even if some people have gone and you get really worried you can still do it because they can still be with you. 'Cause like their spirit could be with you. Their memory is with you* (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 39, 40, 42).

Some children seemed to find consolation in this deeper understanding of spirit. *Oh yeah, it also made me think that it's OK for others to leave, 'cause you still have them* (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 40-1). Julie also found it helpful. Greer had a similar experience. *It (drama) helped me learn about, like say if somebody went away on a long holiday or moved somewhere else, it helps me* (Greer, Transcript 14, lines 25-6). Luke was pleased to know that he too had a spirit which would remain with those he loved. *What I learnt about myself is like that if I go away, my spirit's with the other people, my friends and that* (Luke, Transcript 11, lines 202-3).

Sam told of how Quincy might help solve their problem, even though she wasn't physically present. *We need to think of Quincy's spirit and that might help us think of a thing Greer can do* (Sam, Transcript 16, lines 89-90). Shelley offered a solution, *I heard her say, 'You can do it. Try and do it.'* (Shelley, Transcript 16, line 220). Before the concert, Shelley continued to connect with Quincy's spirit, telling the other children (in role as animals) *I wanted to say we couldn't do this without Quincy* (Shelley, Transcript 17, lines 14).

After the concert, when reflecting in role, several children claimed a sense of Quincy's spirit and the help they received from her during the concert. Sam explained, *She believed in us and that's what made us do so well today (Sam, Transcript 17, lines 46-8).*

Promises

Quincy could also teach you about keeping your promises, not just making them (Sam, Transcript 14, lines 290-1).

A number of the children claimed that being involved in the drama helped them to learn about promises. Rory explained the duality of promises. *It helps you make promises and keep them (Rory, Transcript 8, line 210).* While Tammy seemed to grasp that one of the consequences of a broken promise is a broken relationship. *(We learnt that) once you make a promise you have to do that promise because if you break a promise you might hurt someone's feelings (Tammy, Transcript 10, lines 155-6).*

Arkie came from a different angle when he declared that in relation to promises, the drama *taught me to be a little more trusting (Arkie, Transcript 12, line 57).* This was possibly because as Steve stated, *that Quincy made a promise that she would always be with them. Even if she was gone her spirit would still be with them (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 152-3).*.. The children agreed that Quincy had kept her promise to help them, even though she was not physically present.

However, Angie didn't believe that Quincy had kept her promise. *When Quincy says, "I promise" then she went away and then they, she didn't keep her promise but they did it (Angie, Transcript 8, lines 119-120).* The others in the group didn't agree with her and vehemently defended Quincy, believing that Quincy kept her promise because her spirit remained in Gum Tree Gully. Having the plan was also an important part of keeping her promise to help with the concert *(She kept her promise) by leaving... making...the plan was in her house and then, um, one of the animals found it and um, they did the concert without Quincy (Rory, Transcript 8, lines 155-7).*

Greer recognised that the animals had also made a promise. *She (Quincy) made a promise, she made a promise to them that she would do it. Then she went away and but they also promised her so they did it. Cause they promised her even though she went away (Greer, Transcript 8, lines 132-4).*

Jasmine still seemed unsure of the difference between promises and secrets. *If someone says not to tell them, you keep it as a secret because it might be something that they're nervous and they mightn't want someone else knowing or something (Jasmine, Transcript 9, lines 142-4).* She was the only participant who still seemed confused.

Building Bridges

The story of Quincy and the process drama based upon it, acted as a parable for the story of Jesus and some significant sacramental concepts. I was keen to discover whether or not the children's experience of the drama had impacted directly on their understanding of the sacraments in their lives.

Sam was able to share what he learnt about promises and their connection to Confirmation (*We learnt that promises are*) really important because you make them at your Baptism and Confirmation and, and you can't break them (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 138-9). Luke explained that there is more than one promise made in our relationship with God. *Because it tells you how to make a promise. And also because God made a promise to us* (Luke, Transcript 8, lines 209, 213).

Jasmine and Greer referred to more earthly folk to whom they made promises. *It reminded me of my best friend because to keep promises with your friends and your family* (Jasmine, Transcript 14, lines 297-8). *It reminded me of my best friend because Quincy kept her promises* (Greer, Transcript 14, lines 293, 295). This association with people with whom they have a relationship was of interest because promises made within the Church community are central to fully understanding the sacrament of Confirmation.

Spirit is also an integral notion in Confirmation. Clarice suggests the drama helped her to understand more about spirit in relation to receiving the sacraments. *With the spirit, 'cause the spirit and the love because when God is with us and his spirit is with us and his love is with us* (Clarice, Transcript 7, lines 244-5). Sam seems to have realised some connection between Quincy's spirit and God's spirit, although it is not fully explained. *We learnt, see think back to that day and we learnt that when we got confirmed because I know it was before we got confirmed, when we got confirmed we were receiving the full Holy Spirit of Jesus* (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 159-162). Perhaps Bede summed it up best when he said, *It helped me get ready but I don't know why. I can't remember why* (Bede, Transcript 7, lines 263-4).

Jackie and her group seemed to have a clear understanding of the allegory, claiming that the Quincy story reminded them of the Jesus story.

Jackie So it's kind of like the Jesus story.

Rory Except it's with animals, not people.

Anne But it helped you understand the people story?

Children Yeah (Transcript 8, line 259-262).

Joel's group also appeared to have a sense of the symbolic relationship between Quincy and the gospel story.

Anne Did Quincy remind you of anyone or anything?

Joel Jesus.

Luke I agree with him.

Tammy So do I.

Steve Because Jesus is like a good person and

he's always with us even if you can't

see him but his spirit's always with you.

That's the same as Quincy.

(Transcript 11, lines 251-2, 256, 258, 262-4).

The parable of *Quincy the Quokka* provided rich symbols for exploration through drama.

Drama relies on symbolic representation to offer meaning to those who participate in it.

The children involved in this process drama were able to draw upon the symbols within it

and allocate meaning to them. *Quincy was a symbol for like um God. Just because he*

[sic] went away but her spirit was still in them (Joel, Transcript 11, lines 242, 244).

ATTITUDE

Fun

*The main thing is we had fun.
(Written reflection, Quincy Day).*

The previous section of this chapter voiced the children's own understandings of how drama helped them to learn and prepare to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Communion. It was also clear from their written reflections, interviews and from observation during the drama itself, that the children considered drama to be fun. *We had fun and it was exciting. It was the best time ever. I wish we could do it again (Written reflection, Quincy Day).*

The drama was seen as an enjoyable activity and therefore motivated the children to be involved and develop their understanding of the content. Clarice believed that drama was a good way to learn *because it's more funner (sic) being in drama than being in class. You get to play and you get to perform (Clarice, Transcript 12, lines 178-9, 181).* Rory agreed, *because you learn it easier because you're having fun with it (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 175).*

Steve clearly found drama motivational. *It made me look forward to something. It made me excited (Steve, Transcript 11, line 193).* Sam was a little more back-handed in his compliment but nevertheless held a similarly positive opinion of drama. *Well it doesn't remind me of Mass, that's one thing I can say! Because Mass is tiring (Sam, Transcript 14, lines 286, 290).*

Self-Esteem

The drama had a positive influence on some children's self-esteem. Tammy described the affect on her. *It (drama) made me feel confident. I felt really happy and a bit nervous because you didn't have much time to practise (the concert item) but you still did a good job (Tammy, Transcript 11, line 27, 116-7).*

Some children also commented on the effect the drama had on their personal relationships. *I felt like a better person because everybody was being friends in drama (Chris, Transcript 14, lines 59, 61).* Shay and Brian noted that drama helps to foster friendships. *It felt like you were having a lot of fun and it means you get more friends in your life. I like it because I'm not really alone and I have friends (Shay, Transcript 14, lines 54-5, 71).* Brian also claimed his confidence benefited from working in a group with other children. *I wasn't (nervous) because I was with other people. When I'm not with other people and stuff I kind of get a little scared (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 130-1).*

ALICE'S ANALYSIS

One of the key questions of this thesis centred on how the classroom teacher viewed process drama as an aid to preparing children for the sacraments. Alice had been present during the drama and had taken the role of Winnie the Wombat at the concert. The children were delighted by her antics. It was essential that Alice shared the drama with the children so that she could call upon their experiences to enhance their sacramental preparation. As stated earlier, the Quincy drama was devised as a parable for use in developing concepts central to understanding the sacraments. It was possible therefore,

that Alice may need to draw out the meaning of the parable through critical reflection with the children.

Alice agreed with the children that being involved in the drama was a positive experience for the class. *The day was great. The children had a lovely time doing all the activities (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 6-7).* Alice also believed it was a worthwhile educational activity. *Well, yes. It's a Catholic school that we teach in and it was a religion programme and a drama programme. It was just a wonderful start to the sacramental programme. They could relate back to the experiences of that day throughout the sacramental programme (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 60-3, 39-40).*

Alice describes how the children made the connections between the drama and the sacraments as they interpreted the parable.

If I didn't refer back to the Quincy day the children certainly would. They picked up the four major words in the story about belonging and they belonged to the church to receive the body and blood of Christ. And they picked up the words 'remember me', that came in the Last Supper and that comes into the Mass every week or every time they go. And they picked up the word 'spirit' and that was really wonderful. The spirit was a wonderful way of ... the Quincy spirit was a wonderful way of introducing

*the children to the spirit because they seemed to understand
that spirit more than the 'tongues of fire' spirit.
And just sending the spirit back to the
apostles. And the other one was promises. That
Jesus promised, even back, well God promised
back to the Old Testament as well with Noah and
the rainbow and he promised to send the Spirit which
he did. If I didn't remind the children of that, they would remind me.
(Alice, Transcript 15, lines 20-35).*

Clearly, Alice believed that the four sacramental concepts addressed in the drama had been explored sufficiently to enhance sacramental preparation for this class. Alice was especially appreciative of the understanding of spirit that the children gained through the drama. *It was a wonderful way to introduce the spirit which is really hard as a teacher to introduce that (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 72-4).* She explains what she believes to be the reason for their comprehension (When Quincy said). *'remember me, don't come looking for me, I will always be with you' it seemed to have stuck with the children so that they could understand what spirit meant (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 75-8).*

Alice perceived difficulties in some groups where the children were negotiating scenes or roles within the drama. *Well there were difficulties for the children who didn't want to be included in a group or wanted to do their own thing and didn't want to go along with the activities of what the other children wanted to do (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 75-8).* Alice commented further *you always find those difficulties with anything you do in a classroom*

(Alice, Transcript 15, lines 49-50). Drama provides opportunities for solutions to be explored in these situations. As noted earlier many of the children felt they were able to find resolutions to the problems encountered.

Furthermore, in Alice's view *there were difficulties with the children who didn't want to do the drama part because they were too scared to show other children their real selves* (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 50-2). Again, the children indicated earlier that drama helped improve self-esteem and confidence.

SUMMARY

This chapter has traced the story of a class as they prepared to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. It sought to give voice to the students and the teacher so that their experiences could be brought to light and explored. The next chapter will conclude the research journey by viewing the data collected in the field in light of educational theories in drama and religious education. The resulting synthesis will allow recommendations to be made which may enhance teaching praxis in religious education, so that preparation and celebration of the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion may be enriched.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

All that was created was good

Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the use of educational drama as a teaching tool in school-based religious education within the context of sacramental preparation. In so doing, the focus was on a co-educational Year Three class in a Catholic primary school in the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

The research was framed by the key question and significant sub-questions:

What are the experiences of one co-educational primary religious education class when drama is used as a teaching method in their sacramental preparation?

1. Does using educational drama to prepare children for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion enhance their knowledge and understanding in this area?
2. Is process drama effective as an aid to learning about the sacraments?
3. How did the classroom teacher view educational drama as a tool in sacramental preparation?

The research was further guided by educational theories which suggest Arts education and religious education both rely on aesthetic knowing to construct meaning. Aesthetic knowing “constitutes a form of intelligence comparable to, though different from other

forms of intelligence, such as the mode of logical deduction” (Abbs, 1989b, p. 4) and is highly regarded by Harris (1987) who contends:

(Religious education is) a field where the religious intersects with education and the aesthetic is a dimension of both...

Religion, with its ties to creativity and feeling, has always been the vehicle through which people have expressed their relationship to the divine. Education, with its focus on the intentional reconstruction of experience, has relied strongly on the creation of *conceptual* form, but is in need of the *perceptible* form more proper to art. Thus the field can only be enhanced by the inclusion of the aesthetic (p. 144).

Others have joined Harris in a call to return the Arts to a central pedagogical position within religious education (Dewey, 1934; John Paul II, 1999; Lee, 1995; Goldburg 2001) and this has confirmed my own belief in the value of this union as an educational approach which privileges both affective and cognitive learning. Thus repairing the chasm which has developed between these two equally valid ways of knowing.

Furthermore, drama as a strand of Arts education, offers particular opportunities for religious knowing because of the potential aesthetic experiences which are embedded in the art form. While honouring the students’ religious freedom, “religious knowledge acquired through direct experience seems able to direct people’s lives in a way that mere assent to doctrine does not” (Watts & Williams, 1988, p. 3).

From this philosophical perspective and from a background as both a drama and religious educator, I questioned the cognitively based methodology used in religious education to teach about the sacraments. By using educational drama as a teaching tool in sacramental preparation, I believed that both cognitive and affective aims would be honoured, resulting in opportunities for improved outcomes in knowledge, attitudes and understandings. The experiences of the children and of the teacher provided a rich conversation in the following narrative discussion of this journey.

Emergent Finding 1: Using drama to prepare children to receive the sacraments seemed to enhance their knowledge and understanding in the area.

After discussion with the two key liaison personnel at the research site, namely the classroom teacher and the Assistant Principal Religious Education, four concepts integral to understanding the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion were identified. These were belonging, remembering, promises and spirit. Both teachers felt that generally, the children did not have strong comprehension or experience of some of these key concepts. They expressed a desire that the process drama explore ways to enhance this understanding.

Cognisant of the pedagogic principles of constructivist theory in religious education, particularly those of Michael Grimmitt (2000), I was keen to give the children an opportunity to give voice to their own past experiences of the religious concepts of belonging, remembering, promises and spirit. I saw this as fitting into the first of his three

stage pedagogical strategy which consists of preparatory work in which the students reflect on their own experiences of the religious concept (p. 216). Grimmitt suggests that the students are allowed to consider their own understandings in this stage, before being introduced to the specific religious content and terms in the next. In the second stage, the children are introduced to specialised religious terms and allowed to construct their own meanings based on past experience. In the third stage, the learners are exposed to additional information for critical reflection, allowing them to include or reject this data within their own understanding. During the initial interviews with the children, I discovered the merit in this theory.

Past Experience

Confirmation and First Communion

As discussed in Chapter Four, initially the children did not appear to have very strong understandings of Confirmation and Communion. There was confusion about the role of each and also between these rituals and the sacraments of Reconciliation and Baptism. It is noted however, that there appeared to be recognition of each and that they were connected in some way.

Emily declared that *when you have your Communion when you're just born and you get the bath and things and you take your child somewhere, you get a certificate (Emily, Transcript 3, lines 85-7)*. Here, Emily recognises that Communion and Baptism are linked in some way but is not sure how. The confusion with Reconciliation was also widespread and may have been due to the children learning about it in class at the time of the interviews.

Anne *What can you tell me about your
First Communion and Confirmation?*

Children *Uh, mmm.*

Julie *That's hard.*

Chris *We learnt Reconciliation.*

(Transcript 5, lines 22-5, 29).

The children had not yet begun their classroom lessons on the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion and appeared to have little personal experience to call upon. When asked the question, 'Can you tell me about your First Communion and Confirmation?' many of the children were unable to respond. In several cases, even further questioning did not always prompt answers. However, at times there were examples of non-specific 'Jesus' answers. When asked, *Why do you do it (Communion and Confirmation)?* (*Anne, Transcript 5, line 76*) the response from two children was, *so you can start to be more like Jesus* (*Transcript 5, lines 79-80*). Whilst this is certainly true, it seemed to be a generic answer when a 'Jesus' response was considered appropriate.

This type of response is all too familiar to teachers of religion and I suggest, is not indicative of critical reflection on the part of the learner but is born out of inadequate experience of the topic at hand and a desire to provide an answer. There were many similar responses during the questioning about First Communion and Confirmation, further indicating their lack of prior knowledge. Indeed my own reflection on these interviews caused me to note, *I still got some 'chronic Catholic' answers. I was surprised*

by how little they knew about the topic. Some had no idea... others had it confused with other sacraments (Analytic Memo 3, lines 14-5, 17-8).

A few children seemed to have some understanding including Bede, who recognised that *Confirmation means promises (Bede, Transcript 3, line 75)* and other members of his group agreed. Greer tells us, *well it's like the first time you get Baptised and then you get your Confirmation so you're being accepted again. I don't know why but (Greer, Transcript 4, lines 122-3).* Jackie knew that Communion was *when you get to eat and drink the blood and bread and you're a spirit of God or something (Jackie, Transcript 4, lines 79-82).* However she didn't think there was any difference between Confirmation and Communion.

It was a comment from Brian which interested me most as a religious educator with a background in educational drama.

*I'm getting ready to be nice to everyone... and pretending to do it. Getting mummy to... Well I get ready for it because I **pretend** how you actually **do** the Communion thing...my mum holds the bread and she puts some juice in the wine glass and then I take it. I drink it and then take the bread...You're pretending to be a person like Jesus. You're actually drinking some wine and some bread like Jesus and his disciples were actually doing (Brian, Transcript 6, lines 47-8, 52-3, 55-7, 78, 82-5)*

Brian was able to relate his experience of pretending, to that of Jesus at the Last Supper. This suggested that other children may also benefit if drama was incorporated into their sacramental preparation.

While the children on the whole, did not appear to have strong understandings or experiences of the actual sacraments of Confirmation and Communion, they happily discussed what they understood about belonging, remembering, promises and spirit based on their experiences of them.

Belonging

They seemed to have a firm grasp on where they belonged and how they knew it, most especially within the family and school context. There were however various understandings of belonging to a church. Bede was not sure that he belonged because he hadn't *been since last year (Bede, Transcript 3, Line 247)* whereas others felt that they belonged at church even though their attendance was mostly at Christmas, funerals and First Communion (Shelley, Emily, Transcript 3, lines 245, 247, 230-3)

Developing a sense of belonging to the community was seen as extremely important in preparing the children to receive the sacraments of initiation. Hill (1995) explains the word 'church' based on its Greek and Hebrew roots, "the church is a gathering of people who belong to God" (Hill, 1995, p. 194). Furthermore, he reminds us that the communities of the early church were "bonded to Christ and to one another. The community was noted for its lifestyle of loving and sharing with one another" (Hill, 1995, p. 210). This is still the aim of the Church into which these children will be initiated, to

which they will belong. Through the process drama the children may be able to share the experience of belonging to a community.

Remembering

As discussed in Chapter Four, the children gave very concrete descriptions of remembering, referring largely to pictures or photos. Others however, saw remembering as an activity of the heart. As with belonging, remembering was linked to happy times even when the memory was of someone who had died. Tammy referred to remembering as a sign of loyalty *because it shows that they're your best friend (Tammy, Transcript 6, line 241)*. In the same way, Jesus' words at the last supper, 'Do this in memory of me' demanded fidelity from his disciples. As the children were preparing to be fully initiated into the church of his followers, it seemed that faithfulness to Jesus' command to remember Him, was critical.

Promises

Nevertheless there was some confusion between the meaning of promises and secrets, as Emily explains. *Promises are about keeping secrets and they're secrets only (Emily, Transcript 3, lines 397-9)*. Clearly this needed to be clarified if the children were to develop an understanding of Confirmation and its link to Baptismal promises. However, despite this confusion, the children seemed clear about the importance of keeping promises and that the commitment was ongoing. *A promise is what you got to keep...and you got to keep on doing it (claps hands for emphasis)! (Brian, Transcript 6, lines 332, 336)*. Again, this is essential in understanding the promise they were about to make when they were fully initiated into the Church.

Spirit

Alice, the classroom teacher had identified the concept of spirit as one of the most difficult for the children to grasp. However, through discussion with them, I discovered that the children seemed to have some good understandings of this most difficult notion. They believed that each of us has a spirit and that it is the spirit which remains after a person has died. The children's recognition of a relationship between spirit and God was beneficial in terms of their sacramental preparation. Spirit was also explained as an activity of the heart. *I can feel Jesus' (spirit) because he's in your heart (Aaron, Transcript 5, line 640).*

The stories of these children, supported Grajczonek's (2001) suggestion that children in the early years have little or no experience of the rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. Both she and Grimmitt (2000) suggest that more general religious concepts be explored before the introduction of specialised religious terms and actions. In this way, the past experiences of the students are brought to light and provide a basis for future learning. The findings of this thesis further support this theory, especially when drama was used as tool for the exploration.

Constructed Meanings

Belonging

The children were preparing to complete their initiation into the Roman Catholic Church which has its roots in the Early Church described in the Book of Acts. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in

common (Acts 2:42, 44). The members of this community and so too the Church today, value and support each other as they work together to fulfil the mission of Jesus. They share a sense of belonging to the Church.

The process drama was designed to offer the children a shared experience of belonging to a group which worked together to keep a promise. In particular, three drama conventions appeared to help the children develop their understanding of belonging: working in role, wearing the gumleaf tags and most especially, working in groups.

The gumleaf tags which the children wore were a clear sign of belonging. Jasmine said that *we knew we belonged because we had a gumleaf tag (Jasmine, Transcript 9, line 100)*. These tags acted as strong symbols of belonging by assigning the children to a particular group. Tammy explained, *they made us feel like we were in our groups that we belonged to (Transcript 11, lines 67-8)*.

Jasmine supported the notion of working in a group as helpful in developing an understanding of belonging. *We were all like a group and we belonged to that group (Jasmine, Transcript 9, line 101-2)*. In fact, group work brought with it incidental benefits that were particularly valuable in sacramental preparation. These will be discussed in more detail in a later finding.

Rory named being in role as a useful strategy in understanding belonging because *it helps you not feeling left out because you can do stuff with other people as well as using your whole body to help you with it (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 87-92)*. Steve also experienced

the Christian principle of caring for others as he explained what he had learnt from the drama. *If you belong like it means people care for you (Steve, Transcript 9, line 98).*

After being a part of the process drama, Steve understood that belonging was not dependant upon a physical presence. *Quincy was sort of still there, part of it, belonging to it because they always remembered her so she was always a part of belonging there (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 85-7).* By providing an experience of this element of the concept, the children would have something upon which to base an understanding that Jesus still belonged to the Church even though he was no longer physically present.

By experiencing belonging through the process drama, the children improved their understanding of the concept. Whereas they had initially, described belonging in literal terms of where and with whom they belonged, after the drama they were able to articulate more abstract insights. They came to know that there were signs or symbols which indicated belonging, that physical presence was not necessary for belonging to be authentic and that there were benefits associated with belonging to a group. These are valuable insights when viewed in light of the Christian story.

Remembering

The children developed less figurative ways of remembering after being involved in the process drama. Before, they described remembering in concrete terms, for example, pictures but after were able to recognise more symbolic methods. Brian recognised that *they had gum leaves and witchetty grubs to remember him [sic]. Those things were like symbols for him (Brian, Transcript 13, line 312-3).* Greer explained that *if somebody goes*

away you like, you can remember them in spirit (Greer, Transcript 8, line 96). She identified that a physical presence was not necessary for someone to be remembered. Steve extended this description by suggesting that remembering helped to make the missing person present. *They still remembered Quincy. That still she wasn't gone but her spirit was still with them (Steve, Transcript 9, line 17-8).*

Joe acknowledged the role of the imagination in remembering as he described what he had learnt through the drama. *They were friends of hers and they remembered her very much and they just imagined that she was right next to them (Joe, Transcript 7, line 166-8).*

Using drama to develop a 'pre-religious literacy' concept of remembering enhanced the opportunity for the children to more fully experience the sacrament of First Communion, in particular. By surrendering to the drama these children were able to access the affective domain as a way of enhancing understanding.

Spirit

Initially, most of the children associated spirit with those who had died but after the drama experience they were able to explain that *(Drama) helped us to understand that the spirit was with you all the time (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 211-2).* Similarly, *the most important thing is when they die or go away, their spirit is left there with you (Written reflection, Quincy Day).*

There were several significant developments in coming to know about spirit. The children were able to describe how help or guidance is received through the spirit of another. *Even if some people have gone and you get really worried you can still do it because they can still be with you. 'Cause like their spirit could be with you* (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 39, 40, 42). Sam, in role, explains *she (Quincy) believed in us and that's what made us do so well today* (Sam, Transcript 17, lines 46-8). Likewise Shelley heard her (Quincy) say, *'You can do it. Try and do it'* (Shelley, Transcript 16, line 220).

Some children seemed comforted to know that the spirit remains after a person has gone. Brian explained, *it also made me think that it's OK for others to leave 'cause you still have them* (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 40-1). Greer concurred. *It helped me learn about, like say if somebody went on a long holiday or moved somewhere else, it helps me* (Greer, Transcript 14, lines 25-6). Similarly, Luke was happy to realise that *if I go away, my spirit's with the other people, my friends and that* (Luke, Transcript 11, lines 202-3).

Spirit, as it relates to the sacraments, is a vital and sometimes difficult concept for young children to understand. Teachers have found it difficult to explain in relation to the story of Jesus and the church. The drama provided fertile ground from which new understandings were unearthed and could grow.

Promises

As noted in Chapter Four, many of the children were confused by the difference between promises and secrets in our initial discussions. However after experiencing the concept of promises in the drama, this confusion was no longer apparent, except in one participant.

The drama had helped to clarify the meaning for the children. As Rory said, *it (the drama) helps you make promises and keep them (Rory, Transcript 8, line 210).*

Tammy learnt that the result of a broken promise might be a broken relationship. *We learnt that once you make a promise you have to do that promise because if you break a promise you might hurt someone's feelings (Tammy, Transcript 10, lines 155-6).* This is important in the context of religious education because of the significance of sin causing a broken relationship with God and the community. Moreover, the children seemed to develop an understanding that a promise can be kept in spirit. *Quincy made a promise that she would always be with them. Even if she was gone her spirit would still be with them (Steve, Transcript 9, lines 152-3).* A physical presence was not necessary for the promise to be preserved.

A developed understanding of promises allowed the children to be more fully prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, in particular. Confirmation requires a confirming of Baptismal promises and this promise is made in a community. It was important that the children understood that it was not a secret but a public commitment to God and to the church. The drama helped to clarify the difference between promises and secrets.

Similarly, the covenant made with a God not visible, demands understanding that a promise kept in spirit is equally valid and binding.

By working with important religious concepts which were pertinent to sacramental preparation, the children were able to call upon past experiences to illuminate their understanding. It seemed that the children brought with them some rich experiences of the concepts of belonging, remembering, promises and spirit. However, there was not such a

strong core of knowledge of 'Confirmation' or 'First Communion' upon which new meaning could be constructed. Therefore focusing on the children's experience of the key concepts provided a valuable springboard for their work in the process drama which further developed these understanding in light of the sacraments about to be received. By attending to these 'pre-religious literary' concepts, a more effective sacramental experience was made possible.

Recommendation

It is suggested that because children do not have prior experience of the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation, they have insufficient basis upon which to construct new meaning. Grajczonek (2000) claims this is because the children are in a stage of 'pre-religious literacy'. If the aim of religious education is religious literacy and if sacramental experiences are to be enhanced, it is imperative to begin with religious concepts that are within the present experience of the children. Grajczonek compares 'pre-religious literacy' with the pre-reading, pre-number and pre-writing activities so plentiful in schools. If religious education is intent on employing the same educational approaches that are present in other curriculum areas, then clearly pre-religious literacy must be a pre-requisite of religious literacy.

By starting with concepts integral to understanding the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation and which are also part of the child's experience, the child is able to assimilate new information through critical reflection. Drama provides a vehicle through which this type of learning may take place by offering opportunities for experiential learning, dialogue and critical reflection. It is suggested therefore, that teachers

incorporate drama into their sacramental preparation programmes as an activity to develop pre-religious literacy.

Process drama is recommended as particularly valuable in developing the literacy central to sacramental preparation because of its imaginal and relational qualities. Within the context of a group the children engage with their imaginations to explore symbols and situations drawn from their own experiences but which powerfully propel them to further knowing. Once equipped with literacy in key concepts, they are better prepared to enter the second and third stages of Grimmitt's (2000) pedagogical strategy, where specifics about the sacraments are presented. Because of the rich experiences of the process drama, the children are able to embrace this new information and construct new meanings which they can rightly claim as their own.

Emergent Finding 2: Drama provided opportunities for incidental learning and personal development in areas particularly pertinent to the sacraments of initiation.

The children who participated in the drama did so because they were preparing to complete their initiation in the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. In becoming full members of the Church the children would have the opportunity to participate in that community which is "noted for its lifestyle of loving and sharing with one another" (Hill, 1995, p. 210). Drama offered experiences to the children which supported this way of life.

It could be argued that when talking about choosing “a lifestyle of loving and sharing with one another” (Hill, 1995, p. 210), we are talking about a person’s spirituality. Brendan Hyde claims that current theories of spirituality suggest

...that spirituality is concerned with an individual’s
sense of connectedness and relationship with
the Self, the Other in community, the Other
in the world or universe and with the
Transcendent Other (Hyde, 2005 p. 54).

In a loving and sharing community, one’s relationship with Self and Other would be a least partly dependant upon loving and sharing. Therefore, in offering an experience of a caring community, the drama also implicitly provided an opportunity for the participants to develop their spirituality through “reflective and transformative explorations of self (*sic*) and Other” (Pedelty in Donelan, 2002, p. 43).

Group Work

In the earlier discussion on the children’s understanding of belonging, group work was suggested as very valuable when used in sacramental preparation. However, other benefits of employing this drama convention were also apparent. The children explained what they had learnt by working in groups. *It teaches you understanding and how to work in a group and how to be a team (Shelley, Transcript 13, lines 16, 18-9). Everyone gets involved and that’s the bit I liked (Carl, Transcript 10, line 184). We shared everything out. Like we decided in groups what we were going to do (Emily, Transcript 7,*

lines 82-3). This experience of teamwork offers a scaffold upon which to build an understanding of working together as part of a Christian community.

The writer of Acts tell us that the members of the Early Church were devoted to “the life together” (Acts 2:42). As the Church today aspires to this same ideal, I noted with delight that the children claimed working in a group helped them to develop friendships. David shared his experience, *the best thing about using drama is ‘cause that you get to know people more and be friends with them a lot more* (David, Transcript 14, lines 69-70). Shay also liked making friends and recognised the enjoyment inherent in that relationship. *It felt like you were having a lot of fun and it means you get more friends in your life. I like it because I’m not really alone and I have friends* (Shay, Transcript 14, lines 54-5, 71).

However, Chris shared a contrasting experience as she described conflict within the group. *Sometimes it was a little hard. Sometimes people forgot that drama is meant to be fun and they just, when we’re doing group work, sometimes they act like they’re the boss* (Chris, Transcript 14, lines 78-80). Joe concurred, *sometimes it can get into big fights* (Joe, Transcript 13, line 162). Rory also recognised that problems exist, even accepting some responsibility for the tension. *It helps you keep your self-control when you get angry with other people* (Rory, Transcript 13, lines 73-4). The children recognised that in these situations, conflict resolution or negotiation was appropriate and offered their own solutions. *You tell them to stop and we work it out together and we work altogether* (Jasmine, Transcript 14, lines 94-5). The drama provided rich experiences of dealing

with conflict and finding peaceful solutions. This is surely a skill which is highly valued in any community.

Self-confidence

As well as developing these relationship skills, working in groups helped the children to improve their own self- confidence. They reported that working with the other group members meant they did not feel nervous. *I wasn't (nervous) because I was with other people. When I'm not with other people and stuff I kind of get a little scared (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 130-1).* Luke's confidence came from knowing that help was close at hand if needed. *Like if you forgot something you were meant to do, like the person next to you can tell you what to do in that bit (Luke, Transcript 11, lines 127-9).*

Joe's confidence in himself seems to have had a positive effect on his self-esteem when he is able to happily acknowledge someone else's possible expertise. *Yeah, you're not always the best person in your group if you think you are. Other people might be better...It made me happy to feel that other people might be better (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 239-240, 245).* Chris said that *she felt like a better person because everyone was being friends in drama (Chris, Transcript 14, lines 59, 61).* Tammy had the confidence to communicate more deeply with the other children. *It made us share how we feel (Tammy, Transcript 11, line 122).*

The drama was successful in providing relational experiences where skills integral to life in a community were practised and developed. The newly developed understandings were not explicitly taught but rather the learning took place as a consequence of using drama as

a teaching strategy. In group situations, the children enhanced their ability to make friends, enjoy the company of others, communicate, work together for the common good, resolve conflict and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.

When viewed through the lens of a Christian Church community, these abilities are central to successful membership and are reminiscent of the early church, where a catechumen was sponsored by a community and learnt its ways by being immersed in the culture. Some understandings were ‘caught’ rather than ‘taught’. Using group work as a teaching strategy might be a way of incorporating this ‘osmosis-type’ teaching method of the church of the apostles.

The personal qualities as listed above are concerned with Self and Other and therefore with spirituality. Whilst acknowledging the religious and spiritual freedom of the individuals to accept or reject the model experienced, drama provided an excellent way to offer the bodily and sensory experiences which are so “essential in nurturing spirituality in children” (Hyde, 2005, p. 61). Again, the spiritual content was not so much ‘taught’ as ‘caught’.

Recommendation

When preparing children to receive the sacraments of initiation within the tradition of the Catholic Church, teachers should employ drama as a teaching strategy because of the inherent learning opportunities, particularly in group work. These allow children to develop skills and attitudes necessary for a “lifestyle of loving and sharing with one another” (Hill, 1995, p. 210) which is the hallmark of a Christian community. Drama also

presents possibilities for spirituality to be nourished as decisions are made regarding Self and Other and how they relate.

Attention should be paid to explicit planning for these implicit learning outcomes, by using group work as a strategy within the drama. Furthermore, for incidental learning to be maximised, the groups should be allowed freedom to resolve conflicts, negotiate outcomes, help each other and to enjoy the experience. In so doing, concepts central to pre-religious literacy will be enhanced and sacramental preparation will be more effective.

Emergent Finding 3: That drama is a vital and essential tool for teachers of religious education.

Alice is an experienced religious educator and classroom teacher who delights in being part of the sacramental preparation of her class. She does not include educational drama in her classroom practice, believing it is better left to specialist teachers. However, she values drama, believing that *it gets the message across a lot easier* (Alice, Transcript 2, line 112).

Alice shared concerns with me about the sacramental preparation of previous classes of children. Being involved in religious and drama education and research, I was challenged by one comment in particular. Alice referred to the children's inability to understand the concept of 'spirit'.

*I don't think they do. I think it shows through.
We do relate it to the Holy Spirit coming. They
always think that this bird flew in and dropped
these fires of flame on top of the apostles. I
think that's about it. That's probably all they
can cope with yet, too (Alice, Transcript 1, lines 158-162).*

Within this statement describing the Pentecost experience (Acts 2:1-4), Alice has referred to the specifically religious phenomena of Holy Spirit, flames, apostles and the bird as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Within the context of Grajczonek's (2001) work on pre-religious literacy, these would be difficult concepts for children with no experience of them to comprehend. However, if children are to be prepared to receive the sacraments, surely we as teachers are bound to assist them in achieving as high a level of understanding as possible. It seemed that new methods of teaching may be needed to assist in enhancing understanding.

Being a religious educator experienced in educational drama and, believing as Kant did, that knowledge could be constructed through an aesthetic experience, I began to formulate ways in which this might be provided for the children. Eventually, I settled on a process drama based on a story I had written for the parish sacramental programme some years earlier. *Quincy the Quokka* appealed as a pretext because it included the key concepts which were to be explored. Furthermore, it allowed the drama to act as a parable by relying on metaphor and symbols, with aesthetic experience as a mode of interpreting them.

McLean (1996) contends that a drama teacher must develop an ‘aesthetic consciousness’ or understanding, so that by “working with students using the artistic form, they may use this heightened awareness to engage students in a meaningful aesthetic experience” (McLean, 1996, p. 13). McLean’s own research led her to believe that even among drama teachers much confusion existed about aesthetic engagement and how it was facilitated. I was concerned therefore, that a teacher like Alice, was inexperienced in educational drama, would find difficulty in providing an aesthetic framework in which the learning could take place. Indeed this is not always easy for more experienced educational drama practitioners, myself included. Guided by the research question, it was clear the experiences of the children were paramount. So heeding McLean’s words and realising that I was a little further along the way of my ‘aesthetic apprenticeship’ than Alice, who claimed not to have begun, I decided to teach the lesson myself and invite Alice to join me on the journey.

While Alice was neither qualified nor confident to teach the drama it was imperative that she was present so that she could be part of “the three important criteria of drama pedagogy that are situated at the centre of the aesthetic experience:

- dialogue
- experiential learning and teacher/students working as co-artists
- critical reflection” (McLean, 1996, p. 14).

Alice participated in the teaching day and took the role of Winnie the Wombat at the concert. She was able to be part of the dialogue as the children worked in their groups and critically reflected on their experiences. This reflection continued into her teaching of

the BCE (2003) module *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* as together, she and the children sought to draw out the meaning from the parable of Quincy. *They could relate back to the experiences of that day throughout the sacramental programme (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 39,40).*

Alice was very positive about the effectiveness of using drama to prepare children to receive the sacraments. *It was just a wonderful start to the sacramental programme (Alice, Transcript 15, line 63). They picked up the four major words in the story (namely belonging, remembering, promises and spirit) (Alice, Transcript 15, line 21).* Alice recognised that the experiences of that day helped the children to make connections and deepen understanding. *If I didn't refer back to the Quincy day the children certainly would (Alice, Transcript 15, line 20).* She was especially pleased with the improved understanding of spirit.

The Quincy spirit was a wonderful way of introducing the children to the spirit because they seemed to understand that spirit more than the 'tongues of fire' spirit. And just sending the spirit back to the apostles (Alice, Transcript 15, lines 27-30).

As the drama developed, I was aware of trying to make the aesthetic experience explicit for the children, conscious of Dewey's (1934) claim that any experience had the potential to be aesthetic. Similarly, I engaged my religious imagination so that as Harris (1987) suggests I was attentive to "what is of ultimate concern and meaning" (p. 12) so that I could guide the children towards it. Both the aesthetic and religious experiences were essential in obtaining the utmost benefit from the drama.

Hyde (2005) suggests that children's spirituality is nurtured by experiences which involve both the body and the senses. I suggest that drama as a mode of experiential, bodily learning makes it a perfect ally in nurturing spirituality. Mindful of the role of teachers in Catholic schools to support their students' spirituality I noted the benefits of the drama to provide opportunities for the participants to engage with and explore Self and Other.

Alice, an experienced religious education teacher appreciated the usefulness of employing drama as a teaching strategy to assist in the sacramental preparation of her class, even though she felt inadequately qualified to teach it. She was able to observe improved understandings which grew out of the drama experience. Furthermore, she believed the children because of their involvement in the drama, more easily understood the concepts. I suggest that the benefits would have been even greater if the same teacher had facilitated both the process drama and the classroom teaching of the BCE (2003) module *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers*.

Recommendation

The BCE modules which form the basis of classroom Religious Education in the Brisbane Archdiocese, are based on a model for developing religious literacy, that in turn has a strong educational focus. During these lessons, a faith response is not demanded from the children, however, teachers are also asked to assist in the spiritual development of the children. To maintain their accreditation to teach RE, religious educators in BCE schools are required to participate in ongoing in-service relevant to Religious Education and their own and the children's spirituality.

de Souza (2004) suggests that teachers themselves must become more reflective and intuitive to develop their own spirituality so that they can more readily recognise and address the spirituality of their students (p. 28). She recognises the need to engage children affectively. Hyde (2005) concurs but warns that “not all teachers of religious education may be equipped professionally and/or personally for nurturing spirituality in this way” (Hyde, 2005, p. 61) and calls for the personal and professional formation of teachers.

Drama might be considered one such method when used as an aid to learning about the sacraments. However, as Greene (1999) cautions “important as the incorporation of aesthetic education in curricula may be, it is the teacher who makes the difference” (p. 15). An effective teacher would need to possess certain skills and attitudes for the full potential of the drama and religious education to be realised. These qualities would include

- developing an aesthetic consciousness
- experiencing aesthetic knowing
- nurturing of own spirituality
- developing the imagination.

Ideally, all teacher pre-service education would include training in and experience of the aesthetic within educational drama, so that teachers could choose to incorporate drama education methods into their classroom praxis. Opportunities to attend in-service workshops should be provided for those who are already teaching. Specific drama strategies should include teacher in role working as co-artist, process drama and

conventions which would be useful in process drama, for example freeze frames, role play and dramatic play.

This is especially critical for teachers who will be involved in sacramental preparation because drama education is peculiarly situated to offer cognitive, aesthetic, religious and spiritual experiences to participants. However if these experiences are to be transformational, they must be made explicit. The teacher's own heightened awareness will impact on how successfully the children will construct new understanding. Therefore, teachers must develop their own religious imagination and spirituality to effectively use drama as a teaching method in Religious Education.

Emergent Finding 4: Using elements of process drama is an effective teaching strategy for sacramental preparation.

For classroom teaching to be more than merely telling students what to believe and how to think about religious matters, creativity and imagination are required. Here the best allies may be those teaching approaches in other curriculum areas which are successful in engaging the students' interests (Ryan, 1997, p. 93).

It would appear from my observations and subsequent discussions that the children were engaged in and enjoyed the drama. From the time they entered the room and discovered

the coloured cloths on the windows and the desks moved to open up a space in the centre, their delight and intrigue was obvious.

Motivation

Throughout the day the children were obviously motivated to be involved in the drama. Discussion and negotiation within the groups was largely energetic and meaningful. Many children volunteered when called upon to present, for example their freeze frames. They were undoubtedly having fun and this was shared in one of the written reflections provided by the children. *We had fun and it was exciting. It was the best time ever. I wish we could do it again (Written reflection, Quincy Day).*

In group interviews, the children were very positive about the drama conventions in general. Their ‘favourites’ included freeze frames, role playing, working in a group and writing in role. Furthermore, drama was seen as a good way to learn *because it’s more funner (sic) being in drama than being in class. You get to play and you get to perform (Clarice, Transcript 12, Lines 178-9, 181).* Rory also thought drama was fun and recognised the educational benefits of learning in an enjoyable way. *You learn it easier because you’re having fun with it (Rory, Transcript 13, Line 175).* The children were energised and engaged as they explored the sacramental concepts by having fun in drama. This proved to be highly motivating as Steve explains, *it made me look forward to something. It made me excited (Steve, Transcript 11, Line 193).*

Process drama answered Ryan’s (1997) call to engage successfully the students’ interests because of its motivational qualities. The children were not merely passive recipients of

facts but through creativity and imagination were actively involved in meaning making. As Dewey (1934) claimed, the aesthetic has the power to overcome the anaesthetic. de Souza (2005) discovered in her 1999 research that many students in high schools found religious education less than stimulating. Vines and Yates (2000) join Bidwell (1990) in suggesting that “dramatic experience is a resource that students can enjoy and that appears to foster motivation” (Bidwell in Vines & Yates, 2000, p. 112). By using drama to motivate the children the possibility of an anaesthetic effect in Religious Education will be minimised.

Motivation, however was not the major benefit of using drama to prepare children for the sacraments. A far greater advantage was evidenced when the children were led into an aesthetic experience as they engaged with the art form. The learning was enhanced because *it feels like it is really happening* (Tammy, Transcript 11, lines 27-8).

Aesthetic Experience

As the teacher I was ever conscious of attending to the aesthetic and guiding the children towards it, cognisant always that it must be a conscious act. Using the convention of teacher in role was immensely valuable in working as co-artist with the children. I noted a particular benefit of this strategy when using it in religious education which honours the religious freedom of children.

Present practice within religious education acknowledges the plurality of classrooms in Catholic schools and therefore does not seek to ‘enfaith’ the students. By working in role

with the children, the teacher's traditional role of leader and provider of knowledge is blurred. The 'mantle of the expert' rests comfortably on the shoulders of both students and teacher as they are free to unearth their own truths. The teacher in role does not impose information on the participants as co-artists but guides them towards their own creation of meaning. At times, the teacher will take a lower status role and allow the children to be the specialists, drawing on their past experiences to make sense of the present. Teacher in role is an ideal strategy to employ in education for freedom.

McLean (1996) claims this co-operative, experiential relationship, along with dialogue and critical reflection (p. 14) are the three essential criteria for access to an aesthetic experience. Through working in role I was able to have an insider's view of the developing tension within the drama. This meant I could ask appropriate questions and make meaningful suggestions as I supported the children through their critical reflection. I noted in my journal:

How would I have dealt with the 'Penny problem' without being in role myself? It was so natural to refer to Quincy's plan and remind the children about the promises that had been made when I was also one of them, bound by the same rules. The questions were directed at all of us – and all of us were involved in reflecting upon and solving the problem. I found the tension palpable (Analytic Memo #2).

O'Neill (1995) claims that within the tension of the story and before the conflict is resolved, participants are most likely to reflect on and make connections to their own

lives. I was privileged to be part of one such experience during the process drama which I shared with my students when one participant had to decide whether or not to keep a promise.

Tension

Greer was in role as Penny Platypus and was working on a concert item with the other platypuses when she decided she didn't want to work with them anymore because they weren't co-operating. She clearly felt very deeply about what was happening. The gumleaf tag she was wearing was a symbol that she had made a promise to be a part of the group and work together. Sam was also wonderfully immersed in his role as Pauly Platypus as he tried desperately to rectify the problem with Penny. Penny however, was not to be moved. During a meeting of the whole class in role as animals, the children were asked to close their eyes and reflect upon what Quincy would say or do in the present situation. I noted in my log:

Penny was deep in thought, eyes closed and very still. She had an almost ethereal look about her. At one stage she opened her eyes and looked down at her gumleaf tag, touched it, turned it over, then letting it fall back into place she closed her eyes and frowned. I wondered what battle was raging inside her as she 'listened' to Quincy.
(Analytic memo #2).

When the children were called back to the discussion, Clarice in role as an animal said, *I can hear Quincy saying, 'you can do it' (Clarice, Transcript 16, line 206).* Penny said she

could hear it too and told how it made her feel *quite special and makes me think of my group and what they would do without me. What it would be like* (Greer, Transcript 16, line 215-8). After this, Penny was able to recommit to her promise to work with her group. She was not easily convinced until she ‘heard’ Quincy and reflected upon the gumleaf tag and its symbolism. This powerful experience provided access to her emotions and allowed her to make sense of the experience and find a way to move it forward, remaining true to her promise.

Process Drama

The children and I working as co-artists, paid attention to the art form as we worked in role within the process drama. By surrendering to these forms an encounter with the aesthetic was possible. However, I discovered some difficulties in using process drama in its pure form, when outcomes in Religious Education were important.

O’Neill (1995) is clear that the teacher should never dictate the outcome in a process drama. However, in the scene described above involving Penny, it was imperative that she recommit to her promise. ‘Promises’ was one of the key concepts of sacramental preparation which the drama hoped to explore. What would happen if Penny did not remake the promise? This was an important aspect of the pre-religious literacy needed to understand the permanence of God’s promise to us, our promise to God and the promise of the community which is embedded in the sacrament of Confirmation. The implications then for the Religious Education teacher confirm my concerns about using process drama as described by O’Neill.

As a form of process drama, Booth's (1994) story drama also allows for "twists and turns on the way" (p. 61). Twists and turns I could incorporate but a complete detour may have meant that the pre-religious literacy of the children would be jeopardised. If the concepts which were being explored were not sufficiently developed, the children may have had insufficient prior knowledge upon which to build new meaning.

O'Neill (1995) describes a teacher in a process drama as a guide with an incomplete map, in no particular hurry to reach the destination. In fact the teacher does not know where the map leads. It is the journey which is important. Indeed the journey is the destination (p. 67). A Religious Education teacher on the other hand, does have an end in sight. This particular class was journeying towards the reception of the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion and the 'map' used to guide the preparation was the BCE module *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers*, which names specific learning outcomes that are assessed. I needed to find a way of melding the needs of both areas without compromising the integrity of either. However, remembering that this class was primarily involved in Religious Education, the learning outcomes for it were privileged to some extent by influencing the direction of the drama.

The pretext chosen also worked as a map to guide the drama as it moved forward. The children were able to explore the 'twists and turns' within the story but were led back to the plot and characters to help in their decision-making. However, whilst the drama was not strictly a process drama or even a story drama in their freest sense, I believe the children experienced an imagined or drama world which provided a framework for an aesthetic experience. As O'Neill herself states "the fact that the teacher or leader has a

particular instrumental aim in mind will not necessarily preclude the growth of a dramatic world” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 4).

Symbol

The pretext, *Quincy the Quokka*, is a parable which relies on symbolic interpretation and metaphor. This parable provided the participants with a cornucopia of symbols upon which their imaginations could feast. Once digested, the new information supplied nourishment for intellects starved of meaning. The symbols inherent in the story enhanced the children’s understanding of the key concepts based on this and past experiences.

Bolton (in Havell, 1987) believed that the aesthetic is at work when the search for symbols is paramount. In this sacramental process work, Joel’s search helped him to make this important connection. *Quincy was a symbol for like um God. Just because he (sic) went away but her spirit was still in them (Transcript 11, lines 242, 244)*. Concepts which had previously been identified as difficult for children to comprehend, were assimilated into their meaning-making repertoire.

As the teacher I did not deposit information ‘into’ the children. Rather, through using drama to explore the symbols in and to think metaphorically about the parable, the children were able to “prepare the mind for the one who cannot be named” (Moran 1983, p. 137). Critical reflection both in and out of role was a channel for interpreting the symbols and consequently was vital in the process. Joel and his group seemed to have developed their own clear understanding of the symbols inherent in the story and were able to share them as we reflected together.

*Anne Did Quincy remind you of anyone or
 anything?*

Joel Jesus.

Luke I agree with him.

Tammy So do I.

*Steve Because Jesus is like a good person
 and he's always with us even if you
 can't see him but his spirit's always
 with you. That's the same as Quincy
 (Transcript 11, lines 251-2, 256, 258, 262-4).*

Aesthetic Knowing

Whilst I am not sure it is possible to fully judge whether or not another person has had an aesthetic experience, I was diligent in providing a framework for it to be a possibility. My own 'aesthetic consciousness' is informed by the work of many giants in the field including Dewey (1934); Harris (1987); McLean (1996); Abbs (1989) and Greene (1999). These writers call for the aesthetic to be at the centre of education and for educators to actively set up an aesthetic framework and then to consciously seek and guide the participants towards the aesthetic experience so that it is made explicit. In this way aesthetic knowing as discussed in Chapter Two is made possible. Aesthetic knowing as a form of intelligence is "a particular kind of knowing and feeling which allows us to be fully 'present' in the moment and also conscious of its past and future significance" (Nicholson, 1999, p. 81).

As I observed them, it seemed that the children were ‘fully present’ as they were immersed in the drama.

*What a joy it was to see these little souls
give themselves over to their imaginations!
Accepting roles with ease, sharing their feelings
with honesty and insight, working together for the
good of the drama. As a religious educator I was
inspired by their seeming aesthetic engagement and
as a researcher I felt empowered to see what I
knew in my heart to be true, happening before me.
These seven and eight year olds were living the
theory of aesthetic education which inspired my
research (Analytic Memo #2).*

The children themselves also reflected on the experience of giving themselves to the drama. *It (drama) helped me to feel like it was really happening (Tammy, Transcript 11, lines 27-8).* Sam claimed being in role helped to engage his imagination. *Because when you’re in role and acting as animals, you feel like you really are an animal and you’re starting to know how it feels (Sam, Transcript 14, lines 107-8).* Sam was able to understand what it was like to experience something outside his normal schema. This was significant as an experience upon which he could construct new meanings now and in the future.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the children were able to use the experiences of the drama to build new understandings of the sacramental concepts at the heart of the process.

Brian explains, *because it helps you learn about those things by having fun and actually doing what I, like experiencing what actually happens when you do it* (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 33-5). As Dewey (1934) declared, by providing *an* experience for the children and making the aesthetic explicit, the experience had the power to be transformational. By participating in this drama the students transformed their understandings of belonging, promises, spirit and remembering so that they could relate them to the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion.

Jackie *So it's kind of like the Jesus story.*

Rory *Except it's with animals, not people.*

Anne *But it helped you understand the
people story?*

Children *Yeah. (Transcript 8, Lines 259-260)*

Aesthetic knowing enhanced their religious knowing and extended their knowledge and understanding of the sacraments.

Religious Knowing

This research is informed by educational theories which suggest that Arts education and religious education both rely on aesthetic knowing to construct meaning. It further contends that religious knowing is a particular field of aesthetic knowing. Watts and Williams (1988) claim that religious knowing is a cognitive activity that demands emotional involvement. They suggest that it is through religious and aesthetic knowing that we are able to transcend the division between faith and reason. Using process drama in sacramental preparation fulfilled the cognitive aims by adhering rigorously to the

requirements of educational drama as described in the Queensland Arts Syllabus 1-10 (2002). The follow-up lessons by the classroom teacher were based on the BCE module *Sacraments and the Lives of Believers* which has a strong educational focus. Furthermore, the process drama effectively engaged the emotions of the participants by providing entry into the aesthetic field. Both curriculum areas rely on methods which honour the freedom of the child to construct their own meaning rather than accepting the views of the teacher.

de Souza (2005) insists that there are three essential dimensions in religious education: cognitive, affective and spiritual. Furthermore she demands that each is named and made explicit in planning and teaching. de Souza includes inner reflecting and intuiting in the spiritual domain. It might be suggested by drama educators that these also sit comfortably within the aesthetic field. Moreover, some have claimed the aesthetic within drama provides a space for exploration of the relationship between self and other (Greene, 1999; Haseman, 1999; Pedelty in Donelan, 2002), which is often referred to as spirituality (Hyde 2005). It is possible therefore for both drama and religious educators to strive for cognitive and aesthetic knowing which includes the possibility of religious knowing as part of the participants' spirituality.

Those who support an 'educational approach' to religious education (Crawford & Rossiter, 1985; Smart, 1991) claim a commitment to religious freedom of choice in pluralistic classrooms in Catholic schools. Therefore they contend that 'enfaithing' is inappropriate in religious education. However, this thesis maintains that by denying the spiritual component of sacramental preparation, the freedom of those involved to be fully

prepared is compromised. By using drama to offer an authentic aesthetic experience, this freedom is restored.

There is no suggestion that the children will be ensured of a ‘faith experience’. However, I am suggesting that opportunities to nurture spirituality are planned for and made explicit. The term ‘spirituality’ is widely used and has various meanings. For this thesis, spirituality is considered to be ‘concerned with an individual’s sense of connectedness and relationship with the Self, the Other in community, the Other in the world or universe and with the Transcendent Other’ (Hyde, 2005, p. 54) and an ‘*innate and essential element of every person*’ [my italics] (de Souza, 2005, p. 41). Liddy (2002) and Tacey (2003) view spirituality as concerning the sacred and believe religious educators should also be spiritual educators. In an education system which claims to support ‘educating the whole child’, the area of spirituality cannot be ignored. In the process drama the children were allowed a freedom to explore the issues in light of their own spirituality and perhaps deepen their religious knowing, without the demand of a faith response.

“Religious knowing involves, not so much coming to know a separate religious world, as coming to know the religious dimension of the everyday world” (Watts & Williams, 1988, p. 151). Being involved in the process drama, the children were able to engage their ‘religious imaginations’ as a valuable learning tool in making religious connections. *Drama helps you use your imagination (Julie, Transcript 13, line 202)*. Clarice may have used her religious imagination when she makes this connection between the drama world and her everyday world (*It helped me) with the spirit, ‘cause the spirit and the love*

because when God is with us and his spirit is with us and his love is with us (Clarice, Transcript 7, lines 244-5).

Concentrating on pre-religious literacy concepts was also useful in accessing the religious imagination. By beginning with concepts which were part of the children's experiences, they were more able to make the leap to understanding specifically religious concepts. While Sam did not explain exactly how he made this leap, he clearly credits the drama with helping in his learning. *We learnt, see think back to that (Quincy) day and we learnt that when we got confirmed because I know it was before we got confirmed, when we got confirmed we were receiving the full Holy Spirit of Jesus (Sam, Transcript 9, lines 159-162).* Sam's religious imagination made sense of a complex concept and assimilated it into his religious knowing.

Greeley (1981) believes that the development of a religious imagination is a vital step in being socialised into the Catholic Church, claiming that Catholics have always relied on symbols such as holy water, oil and stained glass in their rituals and religious education. He suggests that Catholics use their religious imagination to make sense of these symbols and that the primary element of Catholic imagination is sacramentality, which he describes as "the presence of God in all creation" (Greeley, 2000, p. 24).

The children who were being prepared to be received fully into this Church of symbols, were given a rich opportunity to develop their religious imaginations by participating in the process drama. This experience of finding religious meaning in their drama world may have primed them to be socialised more fully into the rituals of the Catholic Church

and especially in understanding and enjoying their own sacramental celebrations. As Brian explains, *they had [ate] gum leaves and witchetty grubs to remember him. Those things were like symbols for him* (Brian, Transcript 13, lines 311-313).

Harris (1987) suggests that through the religious or sacramental imagination, all things are capable of being sacrament, God present in the world. Greeley (2000) concurs, stating that ‘God lurks everywhere’. As they followed the ‘twists and turns’ of the process drama and critically reflected upon it in the follow-up lessons, the children were given opportunities to seek out this ‘lurking God’ and discover what place this God may have in the lives of believers. This was made possible by exploring pre-religious literacy concepts in a context which was experiential, reflective, relational and not demanding of a faith response – a drama world.

Dewey (1934) believed that the aesthetic was present in all experiences. Augustine (b. 354), Harris (1987) and Greeley (2000) believe God is present in all things. Using drama in Religious Education is an effective way to marry the aesthetic and the spiritual and make them explicit without demanding any particular response. The participants in the process drama were able to make this connection as Jackie and Rory explain.

Jackie So it's kind of like the Jesus story.
Rory Except it's with animals, not people
(Transcript 8, line 259-260).

Using elements of process drama in sacramental preparation offered a wealth of experiences to the participants. By exploring pre-religious literacy concepts relevant to

the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion, the children were able to construct new meaning which prepared them for more formal religious language. The drama provided opportunities to engage in aesthetic and religious knowing through reflection, dialogue and experiences which involve heart, spirit and mind. The children were able to explore elements of their own spirituality in a non-threatening environment because no faith response was required. The symbols inherent in the story prepared the children for the symbolic representations that abound in the Catholic tradition and provided possible fodder for the development of fertile religious and sacramental imaginations.

Maxine Greene explains the philosophy at the heart of aesthetic education. I endorse this same belief as the soul of Religious Education.

It should be clear that we can never impose an interpretation on anyone when we undertake aesthetic (*or religious*) education. We can only provoke each one to wonder, to probe, to discern connections, to reach deeper, to seek out more and more' (Greene, 1999, p. 16). (*My italics and addition.*)

Recommendations

Within the Brisbane Archdiocese, formal teaching or catechesis about the sacraments is considered to be a life-long process. It takes place primarily in the context of the family and parish. *Children and the Sacraments* (Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1997) suggests that this on-going catechesis is often delegated by the parish to the parish school through sacramental education that takes place throughout the primary years. For children who

are attending other than Catholic schools, the parish provides the catechetical programme. In many cases, children attending the parish school also attend parish sacramental programmes. While this research dealt specifically with children in a Catholic school, the sacramental preparation of all children is equally valued and these recommendations are appropriate in all settings.

A. Employ process drama to motivate learners

It is suggested that those engaged in the sacramental preparation of children employ process drama in their programmes so that the participants are motivated to learn and take responsibility for their own construction of knowledge.

B. Develop appropriate pre-religious literacy concepts

The four pre-religious literacy concepts which were named as requiring exploration were arrived at after discussion with the classroom teacher and the Assistant Principal Religious Education in the research context. They were belonging, promises, remembering and spirit. After engagement with these concepts, the children seemed to be more able to make sense of specifically religious concepts relevant to Confirmation and First Communion.

It is suggested that teachers identify pre-religious literacy concepts pertinent to their own contexts so that learning outcomes for the children are maximised. These might be based on:

- the teacher's past experience in sacramental preparation and difficulties encountered;
- contemporary theology of sacraments;
- past and present experiences of the children.

Once the key concepts have been selected, a process drama may be designed to investigate them.

C. Design a Process Drama to Explore the Concepts

Process drama in religious education should include:

- teacher in role;
- a pre-text which introduces the key concepts;
- symbol;
- forming, presenting and responding;
- suitable drama strategies and conventions, including group work and tension;
- the three dimensions of religious education: cognitive, aesthetic and spiritual.

It has been noted that it may be necessary for the teacher to provide some direction within the process drama so that Religious Education outcomes are realised. However, this manipulation should not preclude the establishment of an aesthetic field. The art form must be honoured and surrendered to. Similarly, the pre-text may provide more information than O'Neill suggests, thereby also using elements of story drama.

D. Generously employ the use of teacher in role in the process drama

because it:

- encourages education for freedom within religious education;
- contributes to the creation of an aesthetic framework;
- enables the drama to be guided from within;
- shares the role of expert between teacher and students;
- enables the teacher to model language and roles.

E. Provide opportunities for the religious imagination to be engaged within the process drama by:

- providing access to the aesthetic field through dialogue, working as co-artists in experiential learning and critical reflection;
- taking care that the encounter with the aesthetic is not left to chance but made explicit;
- nurturing the spirituality of the children;
- developing an awareness in the children and the teacher of the possibility of both the aesthetic and sacrament being present in all things.

CONCLUSION

Background

Through a case study which used ethnographic techniques, I was able to investigate the use of educational drama as a teaching tool in school-based Religious Education within the context of sacramental preparation. The study was centred on a Year Three class as

they began their journey towards full initiation into the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion.

The research had its genesis in my own deep desire to explore ways of enhancing this process of initiation for the children involved. Through my involvement in the sacramental preparation of my own and other children in my home parish and discussion with others, I believed that the programme being used did not allow for high levels of cognitive or affective understandings to develop. This programme consisted of parish-based catechesis supported by religious education in the school. Although the research took place in the school context, the results are also relevant in the parish.

Having a background as both a religious educator and a drama teacher, I was eager to investigate ways in which the two areas might once again connect. The creative Arts have been employed throughout history in teaching about religion and in religious celebrations. The union was severed when scientific, rational thought came to be favoured over the aesthetic as a way of knowing. This dichotomy had a significant effect on religious education. This research sought to restore aesthetic education, particularly drama, to a central position in religious education.

Chapter Two briefly traced this history highlighting the twists and turns of the somewhat rocky relationship of religion and the arts, where the partners move between harmony and discord. This is true also of catechesis as part of religious education. Contemporary teaching methods in Religious Education recommend a ‘creative divorce’ (Rossiter in

Arthur & Gaine, 1996, p. 341) and focus on knowing about religion. They demand that the religious freedom of the student is honoured by not dwelling on any faith experience.

However, when sacramental preparation is the specific subset of religious education, new questions about religious freedom must be asked. . “Schillebeeckx emphasizes the role of active faith in sacraments without which they cannot be fruitful” (Irwin, 1987, p. 920).

Similarly, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (59)* pre-supposes faith on the part of the recipient. *A Statement on Religious Education for Catholic Schools* suggests

“classroom teachers of religion...seek to foster the religious understanding, and *nurture the faith growth of their students through effective teaching*” [my italics] (Barry &

Brennan, 1997a, p. 8). Therefore, for the religious freedom of the child to be privileged, opportunities for faith development must be included in sacramental preparation as part of Religious Education.

The review of the literature illustrated that the Arts and religion are well coupled because of their common experiences within the aesthetic field. By integrating the two areas, students may be offered the possibility of an aesthetic experience which in turn opens a space for deepening spirituality and religious knowing to take place. The call for a return to this integration comes from many religious educators (Harris, 1987; Lee, 1995; Groome, 1998; John Paul I,I 1999; Fleischer, 2000; Osmer, 2000; Goldberg, 2001; Bathersby, 2005). The results of this investigation further support the bond.

Using ethnographic techniques, data was collected through participant observation, interviews, video/audio recording and written documents within the context of a case

study. This process was explained in detail in Chapter Three. The data provided valuable insights from the participants in realising the aim of exploring the use of educational drama as a teaching tool in school-based Religious Education within the context of sacramental preparation.

Chapter Four presents the unfolding story of the research process predominantly in the form of a narrative. The key questions guided the analysis of the data. The aim of this chapter was to share with the reader the voices of the children and their teacher as they prepared to receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion.

The fifth and final chapter concludes the research journey by synthesising the data and makes recommendations which may enhance teaching praxis in Religious Education. These suggestions will be particular to sacramental preparation but some may be generalised to other areas of religious education.

Summary

The discussion highlighted several significant findings about drama as an effective instrument in Religious Education.

- Drama, as a experiential method which involves heart, spirit and mind, motivates and engages the students to take responsibility for their own learning. In so doing it promotes religious freedom.
- The aesthetic experiences on offer in process drama provide opportunities for participants to explore religious concepts and construct meaning based on past experience thus repairing the dichotomy between cognitive and affective knowing.

- The strategy of teacher in role situates students and teacher as co-artists therefore disturbing the order of teacher as imparter of knowledge. Religious freedom is encouraged through critical reflection on the part of the student.
- Process drama needs to be modified to allow the aims of Religious Education to be realised while still privileging the aesthetic.
- Using a parable as a pretext in process drama allows participants to search for symbols within the metaphors. Symbols are important tools in developing religious or sacramental imagination because they invite reflection. Through critical reflection, new understandings may be constructed which contribute to religious knowing.
- Drama, especially when group work is used, provides inherent learning pertinent to sacramental preparation. By working in groups, the children experience some of the benefits and difficulties of life in a community.
- It is immensely valuable to start sacramental preparation through drama with an exploration of pre-religious concepts rather than specifically religious language. This provides children with experiences upon which meaning may be constructed.
- The aesthetic experience which is offered through process drama presents participants with the opportunity to explore their spirituality and deepen their religious knowing or faith, in a way which honours religious freedom.

To use drama effectively in religious education, specifically sacramental preparation, it is recommended that the teacher:

- Develop an 'aesthetic consciousness' so that the aesthetic is made explicit and learning potential is maximised.

- Nurture his or her own spirituality so that the spiritual within the aesthetic experience may be made explicit thus nurturing the child's spirituality.

Future Directions

To further understand how aesthetic education through drama may enhance Religious Education, there are several obvious areas for investigation including:

- Research into effective teacher training in both pre-service and in-service contexts, so that teachers' aesthetic consciousness and spirituality are both nurtured.
- Research into whether areas of Religious Education other than sacramental preparation would benefit from using educational drama.
- Research into the usefulness of using drama as a teaching tool in Religious Education with older children in the primary and high school context.
- Research into the use of pre-religious literacy concepts with older children to prepare for religious literacy in Religious Education.

Further research and discussion in the area of drama and Religious Education can only strengthen the bond between them. These two curriculum areas have an extraordinary capacity to explore the most important questions of life through emancipatory methods. It behoves researchers to discover ways of restoring the creative Arts and drama in particular, to a central place within religious knowing and celebrating. Then, when curriculum designers embrace this unification and teachers implement it, the children in classrooms where drama is used to teach Religious Education will discover that this is truly a match made in heaven.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Parents,

I am involved in research for a Master's Degree in Education through the Australian Catholic University. The title of my project is "Drama and Religious Education: A Match Made In Heaven." I will be investigating ways of teaching Religious Education by using drama. I believe that this will enhance learning in both drama and Religious Education. It will offer both the students and the teacher a new way of learning. Therefore I am planning a full day of connected activities co-operatively with your child's teacher, so that they fit in with her Religious Education programme. The topic will be 'The Sacraments of Initiation' and will also complement their Parish Sacramental preparation. This day, will then enable me to collect data for my research by observing the children as they participate in the lesson.

Data collection and analysis is a rigorous procedure and must be carried out in particular ways, therefore these lessons will be documented by video/audio recordings and still photography in order that I might accurately analysis the children's involvement in and response to the teaching methods employed. By having these recordings and photos, I am not relying on memory alone to recall this important data. It is possible, that parts of the recording and/or photos will be submitted as part of the final thesis. It is also possible that the results may be published in education journals or used in workshops with teachers.

I will also need to make notes and memos of what is happening in the classes. At times I will ask the children to either write about the lessons in a journal, talk to me, or perhaps fill in a simple questionnaire about them. I will also consult with their classroom teacher. Her insight will help to reveal any changes in attitude or learning, which the children experience as a result of being involved in this study.

In any of these data collection situations, the responses of the children will remain completely anonymous, ie their names will not appear in any published work. All responses and recordings will be kept by myself in a locked cupboard and will remain confidential, with only the class teacher, my supervisors (Dr Peta Goldburg and Dr Tracey Sanders) and myself having access to this information.

No individual is under pressure to participate and there is definitely no penalty for non-participation! The children are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the activity at any time. They would then join another class for the day.

If you agree to your child participating in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to school. Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Supervisors and the Researcher, Dr Peta Goldberg, Dr Tracey Sanders and Anne Frawley Mangan on 3882 0111.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisors and the Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of:

Chair, HREC
C/O Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Campus
PO Box 247
Everton Park Qld 4053
Telephone: (07) 3855 7294 Fax: (07) 3855 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this letter and for your co-operation. I'm really excited about this project and look forward to working with your children.

Kind regards,

Anne Frawley Mangan
Researcher

Stephen Montgomery
Principal

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: **DRAMA AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A MATCH
MADE IN HEAVEN**

NAMES OF SUPERVISORS: **DR PETA GOLDBURG and DR TRACEY SANDERS**

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: **ANNE FRAWLEY MANGAN**

I _____ have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data (including video recordings and photographs) collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers. If this is the case, confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however I realise that images of my child may be published.

NAME OF
PARENT/GUARDIAN: _____
(block letters)

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

NAME OF
CHILD _____
(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF
SUPERVISOR _____ DATE _____

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT
RESEARCHER _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

Questions to Children Before 'Quincy Day'

Tell me about your Confirmation and First Communion?

When is it?

How do you get ready?

Why do it?

What does it mean?

What is the most important thing about it?

Can you tell me about belonging?

Where do you belong?

Why do you belong?

How does it feel?

How do you know you belong?

Who else belongs there?

Can you tell me about remembering?

How do you remember things or people?

Why do you remember?

What do you like to remember?

Can you tell me about promises?

What is a promise?

Why do you make promises?

To whom do you make promises?

When do you make promises?

How do feel when someone makes or
breaks a promise to you?

Can you tell me about the word spirit?

What does it mean?

Can you see spirit?

Who has a spirit?

Can you feel someone else's spirit?

Post Sacramental Questions

INTERVIEW ONE

What do you remember about the drama we did about Quincy?

What do you think were the main things we talked about during our Quincy drama day?

Can you remember some of the things you learnt from our drama about Quincy?

What did you learn about belonging by being involved in the drama?

What did you learn about remembering by being involved in the drama?

What did you learn about promises by being involved in the drama?

What did you learn about spirit by being involved in the drama?

Did drama help you learn about these things?

How?

Why do you think it didn't help?

Was there anything about the drama you would change?

Did the Quincy drama help you understand what Confirmation and Communion mean?

Did the Quincy drama help you get ready for your Confirmation and Communion?

How?

Why do you think it didn't help?

Post Sacramental Questions

INTERVIEW TWO

Some of you told me the last time we talked that our Quincy drama day helped you get ready for your First Communion and Confirmation. You didn't know it when we did the Quincy Day but I was using drama to help you learn. I'm wondering if that was a good way to learn.

1. How did you feel about working in groups with other children?
2. Was it fun working with other people?
3. Do you think that drama helped you working together in your groups and becoming better friends?
4. Did you notice something about the other groups, the way they were working?
5. How did you feel when you were doing the concert?
6. Which was the best part: watching the concert or doing the concert
7. Does drama help you to learn in a different sort of a way?
Is it different to when you're doing, say, Maths?
8. Did you like being in role? Did you like pretending to be an animal?
9. Did you learn something new about yourself?
10. Do you know what a symbol is?
11. Do you think that Quincy is a symbol for something else?
12. Did the Quincy story remind you of another story?

APPENDIX D

Interview 1 before 'Quincy Day' ALICE

Tell me about your experience of sacramental preparation?

What is your level of involvement?

What experience do you have?

Best/worst experiences?

What importance do you place on sacramental preparation?

Positives/negatives?

What are your hopes/expectations for the children through their sacramental preparation?

What might impact on this?

Interview 2 after 'Quincy Day' ALICE

Alice, I want to talk to you about the day where we used the Quincy drama to help prepare the children for the First Communion and Confirmation.

Can you talk to me about what you remember about that day?

Were there any activities that you remembered that they particularly enjoyed?

We used that as a preparation for their sacramental preparation. Can you tell me how you went on to teach them? Did you refer back to Quincy?

Were there any particular benefits by using our drama to help prepare the children for their sacraments?

Were there any difficulties?

Was there anything you would change?

We took a whole day out of your school programme to do that. Do you think it is worthwhile to use a whole day to do that?

Interview 3 BEFORE 'Quincy Day' CARI

Cari, I want to talk to you about the sacramental preparation of the Year Three children in our school. I'm aware that it is a parish based programme but I'm wondering how the school can best support, or what the school is doing to support the parish based sacramental programme?

How do you think it works?

Can you give me some key words or concepts to include in the drama with the children, that would help develop their understandings of Confirmation and First Communion?

Are there any particularly difficult concepts?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW - CARI

1 AFM Cari, I'm wanting to talk to you about the sacramental preparation
2 of the Year Three children in our school. I'm aware that it is a parish based
3 programme but I'm wondering how the school can best support, or what the
4 school is doing to support the parish based sacramental programme.

5 CARI OK, as you know we believe that we are a community of people
6 and a part of being a community is partnership and I believe the school is in
7 partnership with the parents. I think we have a responsibility to educate the
8 children in their sacramental life and it's an important part of our year three
9 curriculum. It is supported by module that have been developed by the Brisbane
10 Catholic Education Office and we teach these modules in a time sequence that
11 best suits the parish programme, to support the parish programme.

12 AFM Terrific. How do you think that's working?

13 CARI I think we do our best to support the children's learning and I think
14 we do our best to support the parents. So I think it works very well. I think the
15 teachers are very happy. I think the parents are very appreciative and they
16 comment on the preparation of the children. That when they have their groups in
17 a family setting, that the children have a fairly good knowledge of words,
18 understandings and perhaps the only things that may be missing may be the, for
19 some children, is the sense of community that is spoken about in the units, the
20 modules.

21 AFM OK. So, I'm looking at putting together a drama day to further
22 support this, what we're doing here in the school. That's my aim, as we've talked
23 about. So I'm wondering if you can give me some key words or what are some
24 key concepts that would be good for me to include in my learning experience for
25 the children, that would help them develop their understanding of the sacraments
26 of First Communion and Confirmation.

27 CARI I think the first word that comes to mind is belonging. I think
28 children...the whole journey, the whole sacramental journey is a journey of
29 coming into community with. And I think the children need to have a sense that
30 they belong to a special group. I think the word, I know it's not a children's word,
31 but in a sense they need to know they are committed to something and they make
32 a promise to live a certain way and to follow a certain path through their lives.
33 And that's what being a member of a Church community is. That we live our
34 lives according to a certain spirit, a certain way, the way of Jesus. And we walk
35 that way through the guidance and teachings of our Church.

36 AFM Good. Are there concepts you think the children have particular
 37 difficulty in understanding? You've talked about a sense of community...

38 CARI I think these days, with research showing that thirteen percent of
 39 our children attend to any kind of church celebration on a regular basis, I think
 40 there is a bigger need than ever to go back to some of that catechetical work that
 41 was so dominant in the eighties and to really give the children that affective
 42 domain and that whole sense of really belonging and being part of something.
 43 And we do it so well in our school community whether it be on sports days or any
 44 days of celebration. Even ANZAC Day is a big day in our school where we feel
 45 a sense of belonging and oneness and we can feel a spirit that binds us together
 46 and I think we have a greater need than ever to enable the children to have a sense
 47 of what it means to be a member of the Church through teaching them about
 48 belonging, about life's journey, about commitment.

49 AFM Great and you mentioned the word spirit, too, which would seem to
 50 be part of the...

51 CARI Well spirit, it's a bit like, I know the egg you put in the recipe, it
 52 binds us together and I think that, not that the spirit's an egg. I think perhaps, the
 53 spirit brings those emotional things like love, joy, peace, patience. They are
 54 emotional things and they're things that bind us together and I think the kids need
 55 to have a great sense of spirit. I mean we see it on State of Origin Nights or when
 56 the Brisbane Lions play but what does it mean to be part of the community that
 57 belongs to the Church? And I think that we call it spirit. And we have to show
 58 children what it means to have spirit when it comes to faith and belonging to a
 59 family and a community.

60 AFM That's great. Thanks for that Cari. That's given me some good
 61 ideas to be going on with. Thank you.

APPENDIX F

62 Anne Can you say your names for me so I can see who I've got here
63 Anne today?
64 Bede Bede
65 Steve Steve
66 Tammy Tammy
67 Joel Joel
68 Luke Luke
69 Anne And Luke. You're group one today. Fantastic. Some of you
70 Anne told me the last time that we talked that our Quincy drama helped
71 Anne you get ready for your First Communion and Confirmation.
72 Children Yeah, yep.
73 Anne Because you learned about promises...
74 Children Yeah, yep.
75 Anne ...and belonging...
76 Children Yeah, yep.
77 Anne ... and spirit
78 Children Yeah, yep.
79 Anne ...and one more thing: remembering.
80 Children Yeah, yep.
81 Anne You didn't know it when we did the Quincy Day but I was using
82 Anne drama to help you learn about those things. I'm wondering if that
83 Anne was a good way to learn.
84 Children Yeah, yep.
85 Ch Yeah, pretty much.
86 Anne Can you tell me why? Can you tell me some of the reasons you
87 Anne thought that?
88 Tammy It made me feel confident and it helped me to feel like it was really
89 Tammy happening.
90 Anne Good.

91 Steve When it was me that was doing it, I didn't feel any nerves. I just
 92 Steve felt good, like having some fun.
 93 Anne Good, thanks. Does anyone else want to say anything?
 94 Joel I didn't feel anything.
 95 Anne Didn't feel anything, good or bad?
 96 Joel Um, middle.
 97 Anne In the middle, right.
 98 Anne One of the things we did lots of was working with other children
 99 Anne in groups. How did you feel about working with other children?
 100 Anne Joel?
 101 Joel Good and I was working with him (Luke).
 102 Anne Were you? What was good about it, Joel?
 103 Joel Um, that's the hard bit.
 104 Luke I know!
 105 Anne You can tell us Luke, if you want to.
 106 Luke When we were doing a really funny dance, that was good.
 107 Anne Was it better doing that with other kids than if you'd had to do it
 108 Anne on your own?
 109 Luke Yeah.
 110 Anne Why.
 111 Luke Because, um, it didn't make me feel that much nervous than if I did
 112 Luke it on my own.
 113 Joel It would have been better if we had done it in all three versions.
 114 Anne What does that mean?
 115 Joel Well there's the normal version: "Kookaburra sitting on the old
 116 Joel gum tree" and there's "Kookaburra sits on the electric wire" and
 117 Joel "Kookaburra sitting at the MCG."
 118 Anne And how many versions did you do?
 119 Joel We only did one.
 120 Anne Well you can remember that for next time. That would have been
 121 Anne fun for us if you'd done three versions as well. Steve?

122 Steve I like doing it as well because I felt like I was part of the group and
 123 Steve we did jokes and I don't remember what our joke was.
 124 Anne That's alright. Big voice Tammy.
 125 Tammy I liked in when we were in groups and we had those gum leaves to
 126 Tammy show which group we were in and we had to do a play.
 127 Anne And why did you like wearing the gum leaves?
 128 Tammy Because they made us feel like we were in our groups that we
 129 Tammy belonged to.
 130 Anne Great. Bede?
 131 Bede I liked the lollies.
 132 Lots of laughs
 133 Anne Why did we have the lollies, do you remember?
 134 Bede Um
 135 More laughs
 136 Anne Do you remember Steve?
 137 Steve No.
 138 Anne What sort of lollies were they?
 139 Children They were gum leaves and sour worms.
 140 Anne Worms, witchetty grubs.
 141 Children Yeah.
 142 Anne Why did we have worms and witchetty grubs?
 143 Luke We were acting like a koala.
 144 Joel And we were hungry.
 145 Anne Yes and was there another reason? Were we remembering
 146 Anne something when we had them?
 147 Tammy We were remembering Quincy.
 148 Anne Do you remember why? Why did we have them to remember
 149 Anne Quincy?
 150 Tammy Because they made us feel like we were part of Quincy.
 151 Anne Remember we all ate them with Quincy the night before she went
 152 Anne away.

153 Tammy Yeah.

154 Anne Do you remember that? Steve's nodding, so's Bede and that's why

155 Anne we had them. Let's talk about the concert. How did you feel when

156 Anne you were doing the concert?

157 Joel I felt bored.

158 Bede I can't remember what I felt.

159 Anne You were telling me before that you didn't feel nervous because

160 Anne you were doing it with other people. Was it fun doing it with other

161 Anne people?

162 Steve Yeah, pretty much fun.

163 Anne Bede what did you think?

164 Bede I thought...

165 Anne You were nodding your head saying yes, you thought it was fun.

166 Anne Can you tell me what was fun?

167 Bede When we were doing that freeze frame thingy.

168 Anne Yeah, what about the concert? Was the concert part of it fun?

169 Bede Yeah.

170 Anne Did you like acting the concert or watching the concert or doing

171 Anne the concert. Which was the best part?

172 Bede Acting and watching. They were both the same.

173 Anne OK. Steve?

174 Steve I felt excited and a little bit nervous but then when I did it, I just

175 Steve felt excited.

176 Anne That was good.

177 Tammy I felt really happy and a bit nervous because you didn't have much

178 Tammy time to practise but you still did a good job.

179 Anne Good for you. Do you think that drama helped you working

180 Anne together in your groups and becoming better friends?

181 Children Yeah, yep.

182 Anne Why, you've got to tell me why?

183 Tammy Because it made us share how we feel.

184 Steve And we all did it together. Not just one person did it all and said
 185 Steve they were the boss. Everyone did it together and worked together.
 186 Anne Fantastic.
 187 Tammy We worked as a team.
 188 Luke How I got better friends by doing drama and stuff, like if you
 189 Luke forgot something you were meant to do like the person next to you
 190 Luke can tell you what to do in that bit.
 191 Anne Great, any other examples? (pause) No? Does drama help you to
 192 Anne learn in a different sort of a way?
 193 Tammy Definitely.
 194 Children Yeah, yep.
 195 Anne Tammy, can you tell me about that?
 196 Tammy Well, we played games and we learnt how to relax and it helped us,
 197 Tammy we did lots of fun games.
 198 Anne Yes Luke?
 199 Luke It taught me how to act. That's what it taught me.
 200 Anne Good. Does it teach you other things other than acting?
 201 Luke Mmm, not really.
 202 Anne Think about some of the things you've been telling me about when
 203 Anne you were in groups and Tammy said about relaxing.
 204 Tammy It teaches you about games.
 205 Anne Mmmm. Is it different to when you're doing, say, Maths?
 206 Children Yes, yep.
 207 Ch No
 208 Luke Much.
 209 Anne How's it different, Luke?
 210 Luke Cause you're having, you make it a fun sort of maths thing not
 211 Luke sitting at our desks and stuff like that.
 212 Anne Yeah, Steve.
 213 Steve And also we're not doing group work. In Maths you've always got
 214 Steve to sort of work by yourself and work it out by yourself.

215 Ch Yeah

216 Ch Not all the time.

217 Steve But most of time you do.

218 Anne And you like drama because you can work in groups and work

219 Anne together?

220 Steve Nods

221 Anne Alright. I want you to think about the work you saw the other

222 Anne groups doing. When you saw the way they were making up their

223 Anne freeze frames or doing their freeze frames or maybe someone, they

224 Tammy did some responding.

225 Tammy I like making up the freeze frames. Sometimes when you're

226 Luke playing musical statues it helps you freeze more better.

227 Tammy Not when you're on roller blades.

228 Tammy (laughing) No.

229 Anne Did you notice something about the other groups, the way they

230 Anne were working?

231 Children Yeah, yes.

232 Anne Not your group that you were working in, the other groups?

233 Anne Steve?

234 Steve I noticed they were working as a group good.

235 Luke We worked.

236 Anne Yeah, that's what Steve's saying. What did you notice about the

237 Anne other groups, Luke?

238 Luke They were pretty much doing the same as our group.

239 Anne And what was that?

240 Luke They were preparing and you know how we got those paper sort of

241 Luke things that we got to make a costume out of. They made a costume

242 Luke that really suited their song.

243 Anne Oh good.

244 Joel Well not everyone was doing a song.

245 Luke Oh yeah.

245 Tammy I liked how we did like Little Red Riding Hood and all that.
 246 Anne Yep. Did you like being in role pretending to be an animal?
 247 Children Yep
 248 Anne Why?
 249 Tammy It made us feel special.
 250 Bede It was fun.
 251 Luke You get a chance to actually see what you're favourite animal's
 252 Luke life would be actually like.
 253 Anne Good. Steve?
 254 Steve It made look forward to something. It made me excited.
 255 Anne Fantastic. What did you learn about yourself from the Quincy
 256 Anne Day? Did you learn something new about yourself?
 257 Steve I learnt that you can always work as a group with yourself by
 258 Steve yourself, with the other people.
 259 Anne Great. Bede?
 260 Bede Promising. Whenever you say you promise, you mean you
 261 Bede promise them.
 262 Anne Good.
 263 Luke What I learned about myself is like that if I go away, my spirit's
 264 Luke with the other people, my friends and that.
 265 Anne Good. We did lots of things: we did a freeze frame, we did a
 266 Anne postcard, we did a performance. We were working in groups,
 267 Anne being in role.
 268 Tammy We also got to write things about Quincy on Quincy Day.
 269 Anne We did too. What did you like best?
 270 Joel When we were acting.
 271 Bede I liked eating.
 272 Anne The eating? (laughs) Tammy?
 273 Tammy I liked when we did like a Nursery Rhyme. When we did like
 274 Tammy Little Red Riding Hood.
 275 Anne Good. Bede?

276 Bede I like it when we were writing to Quincy or something.

277 Anne The letter in role.

278 Bede Yeah.

279 Steve I liked doing the freeze frame.

280 Anne Great. What did you like, Joel?

281 Joel I liked acting a rock in the freeze frame.

282 Anne Did you? (laughs with Children). OK, here's another question:

283 Anne Do you know what a symbol is?

284 Luke Yeah, like a karate symbol is like a black sort of bit with a white

285 Luke hole in the middle sort of thing. And a white bit with a black hole

286 Luke in it. (*Ying/yang*)

287 Anne What's that a symbol for?

288 Luke Karate.

289 Anne Karate, OK. Steve?

290 Steve Symbols are like things that are like...it's not like saying it but like

291 Steve drawing it. Instead of saying um I don't know...

292 Lachlan It's like sign language.

293 Steve Yeah, sign language. Like you can just write it and do it different

294 Steve sort of ways.

295 Joel For good and bad it would have like a white bit up the top and it

296 Joel had a black hole in one bit and then a black bit down the bottom

297 Joel and a white hole in that.

298 Anne So do you think that Quincy is a symbol for something else?

299 Luke Quincy was symbol for the animal that she was.

300 Tammy She was symbol for when they all had to do tricks. They couldn't

301 Tammy find her, but the two platypuses did the tricks.

302 Anne Uh huh. Joel?

303 Joel Quincy was a symbol for like um God.

304 Anne Why do you think that?

305 Joel Just because he (sic) went away but her spirit was still in them.

306 Anne Good.

307 Luke Quincy was, you know how she was really brave? She was a
 308 Luke symbol of bravery.
 309 Anne Great. OK.
 310 Steve Her spirit was a symbol because um like she said it would always
 311 Steve be around them even if she was gone, she would be with them.
 312 Anne Great, so did Quincy remind you of anyone or anything?
 313 Joel Jesus.
 314 Anne You've already told me that. Do you want to say anything
 315 Anne different?
 316 Joel No.
 317 Luke I agree with him.
 318 Anne You agree with that too, do you? Good on you Luke.
 319 Tammy So do I.
 320 Anne Did the Quincy story remind you of another story?
 321 Steve The story about Jesus.
 322 Anne What about the story about Jesus, Steve? Which bit?
 323 Steve Because Jesus is like a good person and he's always with us even if
 324 Steve you can't see him but his spirit's always with you. That's the same
 325 Steve as Quincy.
 326 Joel I know where God is. He's there, there, there, there. He's
 327 Joel everywhere!
 328 Anne That's pretty fantastic, isn't it?
 329 Joel Yeah.
 330 Anne Does anyone else want to say anything about the Quincy story and
 331 Anne what it reminded you of?
 332 Children Nuh.
 333 Anne No? Well we've finished.

APPENDIX G

Quincy Day dawned sunny and warm and I was excited to be working with the children in a way in which I felt so comfortable. I really like the Quincy unit and the children who have experienced it before loved it too. Now it's time to really get into the process to see if it gathers the information and teaches the concepts that I want it to.

I arrived at school early so that I could set the room up, to find that Alice had moved all the desks and chairs the day before. We had a great open space in the middle of the room for our drama activities. I covered the windows with coloured fabric to cut down on the light so that the video might work better. I organised the props and handouts so they were ready when needed and waited for the children to arrive.

When they entered the room they were delighted to see it looking different and I believe this added to their motivation to be involved. There were many offers of help and their keenness and intrigue were obvious.

I introduced Susannah to them and explained that she was going to be in charge of the video. Then I began with the pre-text: the story of Quincy. The children sat attentively and listened. It was a delight to watch their faces. They were clearly captivated with the story. At the part where Quincy is taken away, one boy moved from the back of the group to sit at my feet, as if he wanted to get as close to the story as possible. This pretext seemed to prove the power of story to motivate and involve the listeners. I have been concerned that the story is a bit long and have cut it down considerably from its original length but couldn't edit anymore without losing the important elements of the story. It's just over 9 minutes now but there are no pictures for visual stimulation, so that the children's drama work is not influenced in this way.

They loved the freeze frames and the forming of these was highly spirited and full of discussion and negotiation. I love watching and being part of their creativity! The children were keen to perform with lots of volunteers to go first. It came as no surprise that Quincy being taken away was the most popular part of the story to freeze frame. The children were very attentive as audience members. Some of the responses to questioning in role were a bit predictable but this was a new experience for them.

The postcard strategy was also very popular and the children accepted their roles really well. The timewarp produced some good 'feeling' responses to Quincy's leaving. I guess they were a bit predictable too (sad, surprised) but they seemed authentic. Three new drama strategies in one morning was probably a lot to offer the children but they rose to the occasion beautifully.

And it didn't stop there: Role on the Wall for Quincy and then a Letter in Role as the one of the animals, to Quincy in the zoo. The children wrote in role really well. I was delighted with the ease with which they accepted the roles especially since drama was new to them. Shows how naturally predisposed children are to drama! This activity

continued until Morning Tea. I believed the children were highly motivated and keen to continue with the drama after the break.

When we gathered again after Morning Tea, I enrolled the children as animals of Gumtree Gully by giving them a gumleaf badge. These were received with interest and sincerity. From the conversation at the meeting it was clear that the children wanted to go ahead with the concert but joined in with the discussion to prove it was a good idea. I felt that the children's concentration was maintained through this quite lengthy meeting and they picked up on the idea of Quincy's spirit being here to help with concert, quite clearly.

They were obviously delighted with the concert items as they headed off into their animal groups. Their faces were bright with excitement, as they planned their performances and the conversation was highly animated. There were some problems within the groups when it came to negotiating what would happen in their item. I guess this is more of a problem when the groups are randomly formed, rather than letting them work in friendship groups. Although experience tells me that that doesn't always solve the problem and can certainly add other behaviour management issues – which is why the groups were formed the way they were.

I was heavily involved in helping to focus the group work and to move it forward, offering help where and as it was needed but stopping at actually making the decisions for them. This made it impossible to take field notes at this time and I am very glad to have recordings to which I may refer now.

During the course of the drama I had planned to give role cards to Penny and Pauly telling them to stop joining in so that a group discussion about promises could take place. Amazingly, Penny decided all by herself that she didn't want to continue working with her group and I could call the class together without setting it up. I was a bit nervous because in my plan, Penny and Pauly are told that they will come around in the end but in this unplanned version, I had no control over Penny's decision. I decided to risk it. Penny claimed that the rest of the group wasn't co-operating. Penny was wonderful. She clearly felt very deeply about what was happening, feeling 'a bit sad and gloomy.' The discussion was about promises, belonging to a team and Quincy. The children clearly wanted to solve the problem so that they could continue with the concert. Their work in role was very believable. When Penny said, 'Not much' when she was asked if she'd been given any ideas after considerable discussion, I was worried, wondering if this was going to end up in the right place. That's not the best way for a drama teacher to think. The drama should be able to follow its natural path. But as an RE teacher, I need these kids to learn about promises and belonging etc. I needed this to go in a particular direction. But the leading must be gentle and reflective...

When I read Quincy's list, Penny said she felt special. Ah, this was what to work on. We would work to keep our promise to her and she had to decide whether or not she would keep her promise to all of us.

Pauly, too was wonderfully immersed in his role. And boy did he want to get back to rehearsing. He tried everything to solve the problem. Even suggesting that we have a

minutes silence to think about what would be best for Penny. Penny was deep in thought, eyes closed and very still. She had an almost ethereal look about her. At one stage she opened her eyes and looked down at her gumleaf tag, touched it, turned it over, then letting it fall back into place she closed her eyes and frowned. I wondered what battle was raging inside her as she 'listened' to Quincy. When the minute's silence was over, Claire told us she could hear Quincy saying, 'You can do it!' Lots of other children agreed, including Penny. We were on to something. I was very excited when Jess came up with the idea to all call out "You can do it!" I could see that Penny was able to make her decision by feeling special and not because she was shamed into it. This was great – better than a set up! She decided to be part of the concert. I loved the look on her face when she said yes. She was so proud!

This episode made me realise what a wonderful strategy 'teacher in role' is. How would I have dealt with the 'Penny problem' without being in role myself? It was so natural to refer to Quincy's plan and remind the children about the promises that had been made when I was also one of them, bound by the same rules. The questions were directed at all of us – and all of us were involved in reflecting upon and solving the problem. I found the tension palpable.

Joey was also having problems joining in. He is a very shy child and I suspect this was way outside his comfort zone. I decided not to draw too much attention to his plight for fear of turning him right off! He too found a job and was happy to join in.

One of my favourite parts of the day is sharing the meal of gum leaves and witchetty grubs. It probably is for the children as well because they get to eat the lollies. I wonder if they get the significance of the 'last meal'? I guess that's part of the teaching role for later.

What a joy it was to see these little souls give themselves over to their imaginations! Accepting roles with ease, sharing their feelings with honesty and insight, working together for the good of the drama. As a drama and religious educator I was inspired by their seeming aesthetic engagement and as a researcher I felt empowered to see what I knew in my heart to be true, happening before me. These seven and eight year olds were living the theory of aesthetic education which inspired my research. I can't wait to enter the next stage of my project!

APPENDIX H

THE SPIRIT OF QUINCY QUOKKA

By Anne Frawley-Mangan

Once upon a time, deep in the Australian Bush, there lived a group of animals. They were like a family. They played together, they helped each other, sometimes they were cross with each other but most of the time they were very happy and caring.

August 12 was a very important date for these friends. It was Winnie Wombat's birthday - her 100th birthday.

"We must all work together and do something really special to celebrate," declared Bob Bilby. But what could they do?

"Well," said Quincy Quokka in a gentle voice, "One of Winnie's favourite things is going to concerts. I think that she would love it if we put on a concert in her honour."

The animals thought this was a wonderful suggestion and cheered when they heard it.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! We're going to have a concert!"

Unfortunately, the platypus twins were not as keen. "We can't sing. What good is a concert to us? We might as well stay home. The only thing we can do is swim."

Quincy smiled and said, "No one will stay home. There will be something for everyone to do. Everyone here has something they are good at. I'll make a plan for the concert and you'll see. I promise that everyone will have a part."

Quincy worked very hard at planning the show. She thought about all the talents of the animals in the Gully and she made up items for them to perform. There would be lots of singing and dancing and poems and acting. Winnie would love it! Eventually, she was ready to show all the others and she called a meeting near the big Gum Tree. The animals jumped, slithered, waddled and flew as quickly as they could. Penny and Pauly the Platypuses were still pouting but they couldn't stay away from the meeting. They wanted to be in the concert and they really hoped that Quincy had found something exciting for them to do.

"Ahem." Quincy cleared her throat ready to announce the programme to her friends. She read the list in a slow, clear voice and one by one the animals of Gum Tree Gully smiled with delight.

"And just before we sing *Happy Birthday*, Penny and Pauly will do their act. I wasn't sure what they would do until I remembered what they themselves had told us they are good at: swimming! So the twins will perform some swimming tricks for us. What do you say, Pauly? Penny?"

"How will we know which tricks to do? Who will help us?" the twins wailed.

Quincy put her arms around them and said, "I will teach you the tricks. I will be there to help you. I promise. You'll see."

"Really?" asked Penny.

"Promise?" asked Pauly.

"Really," replied the Quokka. "I promise. None of you other animals need to worry either. I have everything worked out." She held up her plan to show them. "It's all here. You can look in here anytime to remind you what to do."

That evening, the animals shared a delicious meal of gum leaves, and witchetty grubs. When they had finished, Quincy gave everyone a gum-leaf badge to wear to rehearsals as sign that they would all work together. The animals proudly pinned them on.

Quincy continued, "Now everyone go home and have a good night's sleep. Winnie's birthday is only a week away and tomorrow we must start our rehearsals. This is going to be the best concert ever! Let's meet back here after breakfast so that we can get an early start...and don't forget to wear your gum leaf!"

Early next morning, Quincy started off on her morning walk. This was Quincy's favourite time of day. The Bush sparkled with dew and was so peaceful. There was no one else around. But before Quincy could take another step she felt something heavy and rough fall over her whole body.

She struggled and pushed but she couldn't shake it off. Then two men with loud, gruff voices came and bundled her up into a bag. One of them swung it over his shoulder and walked away.

"We'll get a lot of money for this at the zoo," one of the men said.

"Yeah, heaps," said the other and they both laughed.

Poor Quincy was put into a truck and taken away from the bush and the friends that she loved.

"Good-bye my friends. Part of me will always be here with you in the bush. Remember me."

Back in Gum Tree Gully the excitement was building. By eight o'clock all the folk of Gum Tree Gully had gathered under the Big Gum Tree. Everyone except Quincy.

They were about to go and check on him when Mary Magpie arrived in a flap.

"It's terrible. Oh, it's just awful. I was sitting in the Bunya Pine Tree early this morning waiting to catch a worm when Quincy passed by on her walk. Then there was a truck and men and a net and away she went. It's terrible. Just awful," Mary cried.

Eventually everyone understood the story but no one wanted to believe it. Quincy gone? It couldn't be true. How would they manage without her?

There was a silence under the Gum Tree. And a sadness. And an emptiness. No one knew what to say or what to do.

“Hey everyone, look what I found!” It was Joey, holding up Quincy’s plan for the concert. It tells us everything Quincy wanted us to do in the concert. It’s almost like she’s still here. When I read it, I can sort of hear her saying the words in my head. Listen.”

Joey started to read the plan to the other animals. Soon, without even realising it, they were laughing and the excitement was back. They were remembering all the things that Quincy had told them.

“We can do it. We can put on the concert and Quincy will be helping us just like she promised,” announced Delma.

“I know what you mean. A part of her is with us. Her spirit is here helping us and guiding us. Let’s do it!” said Bob.

The animals worked very hard over the next week rehearsing their acts, making costumes, building sets and props. It was such fun that they hardly knew they were working. All the while, they remembered Quincy and the things she had told them. Her spirit was with them as they followed her plan. At last the day of the concert arrived. The bush was buzzing with excitement. Everyone was feeling nervous but when they remembered Quincy and all her help, it made them feel brave. Winnie arrived and sat in the place of honour. Isaac Ibis danced a graceful ballet, Barbara Butcher Bird sang her sweetest song, jokes were told and plays were acted. Then it was time for the Platypus Twins to perform their tricks in the water.

“I don’t think I can do it,” whimpered Pauly. “You’ll have to go on by yourself.”

“I will not. Quincy promised that she would help us and I can feel her spirit in my heart. It makes me feel brave. You try it,” replied Penny.

Pauly closed his eyes and thought about Quincy. He thought about all the tricks he had practised and all the times he had done them the right way. He could hear Quincy saying, “You can do it. You’ll see.” Pauly smiled and said, “What are we waiting for? Let’s do it. We’ll be great, you’ll see!” They swam and turned and leapt and the audience was amazed. Winnie clapped and clapped. After singing *Happy Birthday*, the performers stayed on the stage while Kooka spoke to the audience.

“We couldn’t have done this without Quincy. She promised that she would help us and she kept her promise. We want to say, “Thank-you, Quincy, wherever you are.” Then all the animals clapped and gave three big cheers for Quincy.

Quincy was right, a part of her would always be in Gum Tree Gully. The animals would always remember her and she would be a part of their lives. They would tell her story so that everybody would know of the wonderful things she had done. Her spirit would be with them.

APPENDIX I

TEACHING PLAN

ORIENTATING

- Teacher models storytelling by relating the story of *Quincy the Quokka*.
- Recap the key events in the story by creating a whole class story map.
- Small groups choose a different moment from the story map and prepare a freeze frame that shows this key moment. As each group shares its freeze frame, the other groups suggest captions for the image.
- List the issues from the story./List the questions the children would like to ask about the story.
- Whole-class Postcard/Timewarp: Gum Tree Gully before and after Quincy left.
- Consider what we know about Quincy and create a role-on-the-wall for him.
- Discuss how the animals felt after Quincy left.
- Discuss how Quincy felt after he left.
- Teacher models a letter in-role from Quincy to the other animals.
- Students write a letter (or draw) in-role as the animals to Quincy telling him how they feel now that he's gone.
- Creative play: Gum Tree Gully after Quincy left.

MORNING TEA

ENHANCING

- Ask the students if they want to explore the story through drama. When they all agree, tell them that they will all be in-role as the animals of Gum Tree Gully. Divide into 5 groups. Enrol using gumleaf tag. *This will be a sign to others that we belong to this community. By wearing it you promise to be a part of our group.* (Gum leaves should be removed when not in role.)
- Set up the classroom as for a meeting.
- TIR as one of the animals: *Thank you all for coming to this meeting. I have heard that some of you animals want to cancel the concert. Maybe you think we shouldn't be singing and dancing and having fun. I know how sad we all are that Quincy is gone but I think it's time to ask "What would Quincy want us to do?"*
- TIR chairs the meeting and all offer suggestions. Accept and discuss all ideas.
- Decide on a course of action eg continue with rehearsals. (If this doesn't come from the children, TIR should suggest it, referring to Quincy's plan.)
- TIR *"That's a great idea. I think it would make Quincy happy and it's a way of saying thanks for all she has done for us and showing that we remember her... and Winnie will be pleased. We can all work together to make it happen. We still have her plan. Let's read it and see what to do."*
- In groups, children practise items - plan written on cards. Remind them that they are wearing their gum leaf tags as a sign of their promise to rehearse well. Use props etc to define the space they need.
- Give two children role cards as Penny and Pauly. After a while Pauly and Penny sit in the middle of room and refuse to rehearse.

- TIR tries to persuade them:
 - we've got the plan
 - you're wearing the tag as a sign of the promise
 - you have all of us to support you
 - Penny and Pauly re-commit and rest of group promises to help.
- Continue rehearsals
- make a simple costume for the performance.
 - Remember last meal with Quincy
 - Share gum leaves and grubs as a way of remembering her.

LUNCH

SYNTHESISING

- Concert
 - children prepare for their performance
 - final rehearsal
 - putting on costume
- TIR as MC of concert: *It's almost time for the concert to start. How are you all feeling? Allow time for the children to share their feelings in role.*
- TIR as MC of concert: *What do think Quincy is thinking right now? I feel as if she is here with us - her spirit is with us.*
- Perform items.
- Out of role discussion about the drama. Debrief with the students about what Gum Tree Gully would have been like if the concert had not gone ahead. What was Quincy's role/impact on the concert, even though she wasn't there? How might the residents of Gum Tree Gully keep the memory of Quincy alive in the future/keep her spirit a part of their lives?
- Students record a response to the drama and describe at least one significant thing they learnt in the their journal. Suggest that the children might like to think about how this story relates to their own experiences. Does it remind them of anything that has happened in their lives. Encourage the children to note this in their journal.

