Towards a model of empathetic communication in teaching history

Harvey Waddington Newman

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TOWARDS A MODEL OF EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING HISTORY

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

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by

HARVEY WADDINGTON NEWMAN, B.A., M.ED[Hons.]

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- TABLE OF CONTENTS -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Figures</td>
<td>(vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>(vii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>(viii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE - PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Significance of the Research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Organisation of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO - AN APPRAISAL OF EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH EMPATHETIC APPLICATIONS.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Interest in Empathy Studies in Australia</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Influence from Britain</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Empathy Research in the Australian Context</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 A Problem of Definition</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.i British Background in Empathy Development</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.ii The Influence of Coltham and Fines</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.iii An Influential Criticism</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.iv Promotion of Empathy by Schools Council Projects</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.v Fines - A Reassessment</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.vi A Call for Re-definition</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.vii Development of Two Schools of Thought?</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.viii Place, Time and Society Project 8-13 (F.Thompson)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.ix Empathy as an Imaginative Device(Little)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.x Differences of Interpretation</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.xi Structural Imagination and Empathy</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.xii Present Research Directions</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.xiii Shemilt - A hierarchy of Stages</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.xiv Lee - Empathy and Imagination as Supposal</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(ii)

2.6.xv Clarification of Empathy Rationale - A Necessity 52
2.7.i The Australian Context - Similar Problems in Samples from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia 56
2.7.ii Victoria - Supposing as an Empathetic Strategy 57
2.7.iii New South Wales - Confusion over Sympathy 58
2.7.iv New South Wales - A Need for Procedural Analysis of Empathy? 59
2.7.v South Australia vs New South Wales - Differentiating Between Aims and Objectives 61
2.8 A Central Problem of Description and Communication 65

CHAPTER THREE - COLLINGWOOD: A PHILOSOPHICAL BASE FOR EMPATHY.

3.1 Introduction 70
3.2.i Return to Collingwood: What is History? What is History For?? 71
3.2.ii Three Basic Questions - Collingwood [1946] 72
3.2.iii Proposition 1: History as Reconstruction 74
3.2.iv Proposition 2: History as Re-enactment of Past Thoughts 75
3.2.v Proposition 3: History as Self-Knowledge 78
3.2.vi Self-Knowledge in South Australian Curriculum Examples 79
3.3 British Schools Council Applications - An Inadequate Representation of Empathy? 81
3.4 Need for a Broader Psychological Direction in Empathy 86
3.5 Rogers - An Indirect Influence 90
3.6.i Stockley and Empathetic Reconstruction 94
3.6.ii Pitfalls in the Use of Supposition - Dependence on Role Play and Simulation 97

CHAPTER FOUR - THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE TAKING TO AN HOLISTIC TREATMENT OF EMPATHY.

4.1 Introduction 101
4.2 Empathy in Social Psychology
4.2.i Role Taking Not Role Playing
4.2.ii Sociopsychological Elements of Empathy – Coutu’s Summary
4.2.iii A Developmental Issue
4.2.iv Appropriateness of Coutu’s Work to Empathy in History
4.2.v Empathy and Role Taking
4.2.vi A Revised Critique of Earlier Theorists in the Light of This Major Finding
4.3.i Validity of Sociopsychological Elements
4.3.ii Intuition in Empathy - Some Qualifications
4.3.iii Thoughts and Feelings and Empathy
4.4.i Recent Developments in Social History
4.4.ii Imagination in History
4.4.iii Development of Sequential Meaning
4.4.iv The Link Between Imagination and Empathy
4.4.v History is About People
4.4.vi Proust and Self-Knowledge
4.4.vii A Generic Sense of Empathy
4.4.viii Historians’ Treatments of Personalities and Relationships
4.4.ix Psychohistory
4.5.i Redressing the Sociological Imbalance
4.5.ii A Paradox? A Degree of Objectivity in Subjective ‘Integrity’
4.6.i Cognitive and Affective Elements of Empathy - Towards an Holistic View
4.6.ii A Place for a More Holistic Theory of Empathy
4.7 Conclusion

CHAPTER FIVE - CONSIDERATIONS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES OF EMPATHY.

5.1 Introduction
5.2.i Inference Theory of Empathy
5.2.ii Role taking Theory of Empathy
5.2.iii An Alternative Theory - Berlo
5.3.i Perspectives on Role Taking Theory
5.4 Mead and Collingwood
5.5 A Summary of Role Taking Components
5.6 Flavell - A developmental Descriptive Framework for Role Taking
5.6.i A Leading Question
5.6.ii Successive Hurdles Characteristic
5.7 Significance of Psychosocial Role Taking to History
5.7.i Three Representations of Empathy
5.7.ii Hooper - Illustration from Work of Mainstream Historians
5.7.iii A Critique of Shemilt in Light of Present Findings
5.8 Conclusion

CHAPTER SIX - A MODEL OF EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION.

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Developmental Role Taking Tasks Relevant to an Empathetic Approach in History Teaching
6.2.i Recognition of Empathetic Perspective
6.2.ii Appropriate Selection and Application of an Empathetic Perspective
6.2.iii Methods of Analysing and Predicting Outcomes of an Empathetic Perspective
6.2.iv Maintaining an Empathetic Perspective
6.2.v Interpretation of an Empathetic Perspective
6.3 The Teacher's Task
6.4 The Student's Task
6.5 Reconciling the Two Procedural Outlines
6.6 Conclusion

CHAPTER SEVEN - EVALUATION OF CONTEMPORARY EMPATHETIC TREATMENTS IN LIGHT OF THE MODEL.

7.1 Introduction
7.2 An Inadequate Methodology for Empathy
7.3 Influence of Cognitive-Oriented Theory 230
7.4 A Taken for granted Experience 237
7.5 Specific/General Empathetic Development and the use of Contextual Evidence 243
7.6 Development of an Empathetic Perspective 252
7.7 Calls for a Wider Application 256
7.8 Conclusion 262

CHAPTER EIGHT - SYNOPSIS OF THE MODEL: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.

8.1 General Summary 266
8.2 Summary of Evaluation of Model in Light of Contemporary Treatments 275
8.3 Implications and Recommendations for Future Research 279

APPENDICES.

A. Transcript of Waldron Trial 287
B. Life and Death at the Diggings (Goldfields description) 289
C. Life and Death at the Diggings - Deaths at Lambing Flat 291
D. extract from 'Beauty and the Philosopher' - (D.Shemilt1984) 294
E. extract from 'Empathy an Aim and a Skill to be Developed' - (F.Thompson1983) 302
F. extract from 'Empathetic Reconstruction in History and History Teaching' - (D.Stockley1981) 312
G. extract from 'Empathy in History- From Definition to Assessment' - [Southern Regional Examinations Board(SREB)1986] 319
H. drama exercise based on the Diaries of Mungo Park - (F.Thompson1983) 335
I. simulated conversation in 'Assessing Student Achievement in History in Year 10'[Draft] - (ed.D.Cowling1983) 336

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 337
- TABLE OF FIGURES -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Developmental Empathetic Process in History.</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Developmental Role Taking Tasks Relevant to an Empathetic Approach in History</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Table of Underlying Assumptions for an Empathetic Approach in History</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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"Man is the creature that knows his fellows only in himself".
Marcel Proust; La Prisonniere.
The study of more human aspects of history has settled somewhat uncomfortably into the discipline of history. The close association of human characteristics and subjective analysis has tended to be in conflict with the objectivity required to maintain history's discipline. The introduction of empathy to historical treatments has accentuated this conflict. A closer examination of what gives history its objectivity in more subjective treatments and the processes involved is important in clarifying the extent to which empathy can be incorporated into the study of history. To deal with these issues is the central purpose of this study; in particular the problem addressed is to devise an holistic model of the empathetic process which may be applied as a general psychosocial process and as a substantial methodological process for the teacher and student of history. The implications of the importance of psychosocial theory to explain empathy are in need of closer scrutiny in historical interpretation. This scrutiny, if successful, may then be employed as a means of negotiating the objectivity of subjective 'human' treatments of history. In this study empathy is interpreted as a fundamental process of communication and thus arguably, one of the most important strategies for teaching and studying history.
The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Harvey Newman.