# AANZPA Journal
# Sociodrama Articles

Table of Contents

# An Application of Sociodrama in the Training of Middle Management

## by Elizabeth Synnot

Elizabeth Synnot has worked as a trainer, educator, management developer, organisational developer and senior manager over a 15 year period in four different public sectors in Australia. Two and half years ago she established an organisational consultancy business. The core of her work is in assisting the effectiveness of groups in complex and difficult situations. She has formed joint venture partners linking her Brisbane base with colleagues in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Elizabeth is a member of staff of the Queensland Training Institute of Psychodrama and a member of the Brisbane Playback Theatre Troupe.

*Précis:* The group of 21 middle level managers have been together as trainees on two previous occasions for one week at a time. The participants are fearful of self presentation and joining with each other. They are eager to be "good managers".

· This short article presents a series of moments in the group when a control paradigm of coercion/compliance shifted to a paradigm of internalized purposes being collaboratively pursued i.e. a shift from an external focus of power to an internalized motivation or vision being the driver. This is a recurring theme in training groups in the public sector. Internalized purpose is not part of the bureaucratic system. For the flowering of internalized purpose in the public sector, a shift from the system of roles in the bureaucratic system to a vision driven, purposeful system of roles is required. It is not the predominant practice of organisational and management development to ap-

proach the dilemmas of the public sector from a role analysis and systemic viewpoint. The state of the art is to move from a single charismatic or authoritarian visionary to an elite of senior manager visionaries. This is done from the paradigm of an analysis of the overall environment and a planning and consultative intervention. This is increasingly accompanied by an awareness that the culture (core values) require alignment with the new direction. Looking at the situation from a role system perspective, the predominant practice means a shift from a coercive fear driven system of roles (vignette 1) to a participative compliance and reward driven approach (vignette 2). This article recounts an enabling way forward (vignette 3). Vignette 4 presents the emergence of roles of a Purposeful Public Service System which is driven by each member's own internal vision. The author is presenting vignettes 3 and 4

*as an enabling solution to present
public sector dilemmas, that is, as the
`new art' of Strategic Management. It
is the application of the
sociodramatic method that enables
the integration of the new system of
roles, thus moving from the area of
ideas to integrated knowledge.*

I have been engaged to conduct
the third week of course work in an
18 month Middle Management
Program. The 21 participants have
had two separate weeks of training
and have just completed their first
work placement of 9 months. Their
second 9 month placement begins
the week following this workshop.

These middle managers are two or
three levels from both the top level in
the hierarchy and the operational
level of the hierarchy. They earn
about $55,000 per annum. They
manage one of five or six functions in
a Region of an Australian Public
Sector Department. Most have
responsibilities for a budget of up to
$1 million and around about 50 staff.
Three in the group provide policy
advice and supervise staff of around
10 professionals.

We have come to the morning of
the third day in the workshop. The
theme of taking control and loss of
control has been recurring. This view
of their work has been brought
forward in sharing after earlier
sociodramas and in other more
general discussions. Leadership
difficulties with subversive subordi-
nates and mindless, self serving
superiors have predominated in the
two earlier sociodramas. Viewing the
role of manager as purposefully
leading the group has begun to be
considered as an alternative view
point. As well as the desire to work
collaboratively together in the group
there emerges an overriding anxiety
to enter into relationships with each

other. One restrictive solution that is
repeatedly sought by the group is to
have "input" sessions from "entertain-
ing experts". There is also an ex-
pressed fear that they will be "caught
short" in the future and will not be up
to date on "best" management
practices.

The scene for the sociodrama is
one of a bus driver collecting passen-
gers. It begins with three vignettes
being enacted. The warm up to the
enactment includes a guided fantasy,
the drawing of pictures and the use of
story, metaphors and songs. Each
person, through this warm up,
regains and develops their vision for
Australia. Once this has been
achieved the whole group work
together to devise a draft 'reason for
the existence' for the Australian
Public Sector in contributing to the
fulfilment of their vision. Everyone
gets involved and appears enlivened.
In less than an hour the draft Mission
Statement is accepted by all. (This is a
surprise as past experiences include
taking up to two days to reach this
point of consensus.)

Several group members discuss
the application of a vision oriented
organisation at the operational level.
In response, the Director decides to
present the same operational scenario
from three differing role system
perspectives. The vignettes unfold in
turn and are all on the stage at the
same time. The Director's experience
of the public sector is that the ap-
proaches in vignettes 1 and 2 are the
present approaches taken, i.e. an
accurate description of what is.
Vignette 1 displays the Classical or
Traditional Bureaucratic System of
roles at the operational level, viz., the
vision is seen and kept at the top of
the organisation with coercion or fear
being the predominant force. Vi-
gnette 2 displays the Renaissance
Bureaucratic System of roles at the

– 32 –

3

operational level, viz., the vision is seen and kept by an elite of senior managers with participation, for ownership, in operational planning throughout the organisation and with compliance or reward being the predominant force. State of the art management and organisation development is concerned with the shift from Classical Bureaucratic System of roles to the Renaissance Bureaucratic system of roles. Vignette 3 is a new approach. It is the Purposeful Public Service System of roles, viz. the vision is from within each person in the organisation and the Mission (core function) of the organisation is collaboratively created. Individuals then enact their role in the organisation while their driving force is their internalized vision.

The scene in each vignette is the same, *a bus driver collecting a young woman with two children – a baby in a pram and a young toddler.* It is 11.00am on a Wednesday morning on a sunny day in Brisbane.

Having set the scene, members of the audience choose the roles they want to take up and the vignettes are enacted accordingly The story follows the enactment. There is no role reversal.

## Vignette 1

Vignette 1 shows the driver, Jo, having been directed to be *"customer driven"* by his boss. Jo doesn't like this idea because he knows he will be punished for not running the bus to schedule. He sees "customer driven" as the latest plot by management to make him work harder. "What about the schedule?" He is then given the implicit threat that if he doesn't do this he won't get to drive the routes he prefers. At the same time, Jo knows that what matters is whether the bus arrives on time at Bus Stop 16 ( 2 stops later) where the inspector is.

So, the driver is cursory with the woman. Angrily he tells he to "get your act together" and begrudgingly and quickly helps her on the bus. Immediately the two children cry and continue to do so for the next few minutes. Jo is clocked by the inspector as on time.

## Vignette 2

Vignette 2 shows the driver, Jane, being cajoled and talked to by her supervisor about putting the customer first. All Jane's 'what ifs...?' are met with 'this is your new job. Do this and you will be doing a good job'. Jane is told that the inspector is there to help her and collect information for improving the schedules. Jane is not sure about this but decides to give it a go. In the enactment we see Jane lose sight of all else except for the woman and children who she goes all out for. Two passengers later become angry because they are now running late. She is clocked in by the inspector as 10 minutes late.

## Vignette 3

Vignette 3 show the driver, Eugene, chatting with his supervisor having absorbed that it is his job to provide a friendly, courteous and reliable bus service. As they talk it is evident that Eugene links the bus time table with the train and the ferry schedules. In the enactment he provides assistance to the mother and her children. At Bus Stop 16, he is 3 minutes behind schedule. At the stop he talks to his supervisor recounting the story of the woman and her children and discussing the likelihood of such passengers at this time of day.

In vignettes 1, 2, and 3 the scene has been set by the Director and the auxiliaries have enacted the vignettes, i.e., a prepared or leader directed

– 33 –

sociodrama. This changes when Daryl, a group member, begins to frame the sociodramatic question for the group. His expression is, "How do you shift a driver from the first vignette to the third vignette?". This is a critical moment in the group. His question is one that is echoed by other group members. We are all about to enter into the drama unknowing and warmed up to a higher level of spontaneity than has been present in the group thus far. The sociodramatic question is enlarged and now states "How does the middle manager shift an operator from a Classical or Traditional Bureaucratic System of roles to being an operator in a Purposeful Public Sector System of roles?"

He agrees to let me teach him and the group in my own way, i.e., through the use of sociodrama. In itself, this is a major shift in the group to being adventurous learners rather than dependant of fighting learners whose orientation, thus far, has been to have the 'expert' tell them and then to argue if they disagree! I am aware of the requirement for me to model a

new way of teaching. In turn, it can be used by these managers with their own staff and as a model for others with whom they come in contact.

Daryl, the group protagonist, discusses with the group whether to approach the bus driver in the scenario from the position of Inspector. Without an enactment, Daryl and the group decide that this would not produce a change and would get stuck with the manager becoming the 'Sadistic Overlord' in a mutually negative relationship with the bus driver as 'Harried Serf'. In the mind of the Director, she views this as deciding that there will be no movement if the manager approaches the operator to shift from the same system. She supports the group protagonist when he decides to approach the operator from the role of 'Trainer Educator'. At this point she is not sure if this will be enacted by Daryl as a Renaissance Bureaucracy trainer/educator or as Purposeful Public Service trainer/educator. Either way she sees the possibility of movement in the operator in response to a role enacted from a different system.

## Vignette 4 – Enactment

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| P | (Protagonist) Cajoling Suggester "I want you to take a bit more time with your passengers. Think of your customers more." |
| BD | (Bus Driver) Suspicious Defender "I have a timetable to keep." |
| P | Correct Instructor "We can shift the timetable around so it works better for you and the passengers." |

## Director's Process

This is a Renaissance Bureaucracy initiative. It is telling and selling what is required.

This response is to be expected from someone who has worked in a Classical Bureaucracy all their working life (and prior to that has been in an educational system based on fear and shame).

I am struck with how the Renaissance Bureaucratic System puts the requirements of the operator in the picture. This is a significant shift from the Classical Bureaucratic System. (A Dysfunctional Bureaucratic System

– 34 –

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| | | |
| BD | Suspicious Knife Thrower "You can say that but it's not your decision. We've tried to get the times changed before and nothing gets done." | There is an evident truth in what is being said from a Classical Bureaucratic System viewpoint. It's systematically impossible to influence how things are done from the operational level. |
| P | Water Treading Negotiator "This will be different." | Daryl is now 'coping'. |
| BD | Angry Confronter "But if I'm late I'm the one who cops it! It's all very well for you to say it'll be different!" | Again the ring of truth from this systemic perspective. |
| P | Dithering Searcher (Head bowed, hunched shoulders, furrowed brow) | Daryl is now 'disabled'. In his present role state he is not able to pursue his purpose. |
| D | (Director) Warm Confronter/ Coach "Daryl, you've forgotten your vision. What are you setting out to create here." | This is the crux of what is being taught. To be in touch with their own vision is enlivening and *enabling*. The roles that emerge from their self at this time are roles that *enable* the pursuit of their purpose and the creation of their vision. This teaching requires internalisation for their integrated learning of the Purposeful Public Service System. |
| P | Troubled Reflector (Shift in body posture to weight on two feet. Still frowning.) | |
| D | Prompting Coach "Take your time. Let your picture of the kind of world you want to live in become clear to you." | |
| P | Quiet Seer (Another shift in body posture. Open expression on face and eyes lit up.) | Integration is beginning. |
| BD | Angry Rejector "You're setting me up! You're like all the others. I'm going to get knocked off. Who the hell are you?!" | The auxiliary takes up the role from before and provides a role test for the Protagonist. |
| P | Open Inviter "O.K. I've dumped all that stuff. | |

– 35 –

Let's go and sit down. We'll have a drink of coffee and find out what you really want to know."

P   Collaborative Adventurer
"Let's both give this a go and see where we get."

BD  Reticent Experimenter
"O.K." (spoken quietly.)

I pause the vignette here. Daryl says he's 'got the message'. I see that he has passed the first role test.

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The audience were engaged throughout this process. I feel pleased with this progress. While the enactments are ordinary and simple they are also significant in the learning that has taken place. I have been able to stay with my own vision of learning being integrated rather than the group's orientation to 'learning about organisational vision and 'state of the art' management theory. I have been able to operate purposefully in learning collaboratively. I have been able to model my vision. This has been in the face of a group of managers who primarily function from the Renaissance Bureaucratic System of roles and sometimes the Classical Bureaucratic System of roles. I am encouraged to continue working and developing as a teacher in the public sector.

This morning session has begun the process of the group operating out of a purposeful system. Immediately after the break one of the group members initiates the group conducting the rest of the morning for themselves and at the same time practising and developing their roles as leaders and group members. While many of the roles that were enacted were underdeveloped, it is clear that the roles they are developing are emerging from their own vision of themselves in a purposeful public service system. The group persevered with teaching and coaching each other. They have taken up the opportunity to integrate what they learnt in the morning by practising this with each other throughout our time together. These middle managers already have significant influence and are seen as the likely senior managers of tomorrow.

It is the author's experience that the integration of new roles that emerge in a new system have a recursive impact on the former system. This has been observed by the author and reported on by former participants. Her experience suggests that the work of the group will have significant impact in the larger system in which these middle managers operate.

    

7

# Integration of Organisation Theory

## by Cher Williscroft, Nelson, N.Z.

These papers were written as one of the written requirements for assessment as a sociodramatist. I live with my partner John and daughter Milly in a town called St Arnaud which is located at the edge of Nelson Lakes National Park. Criss-crossed through the park is a network of mountain huts which are used by trampers. It is the organisation of people in two of these mountain huts which I have used to describe the characteristics of open systems in the first paper. In the second paper I have described my analysis and interventions with the staff of a veterinary clinic.

## *Part A*

## Analysis of an Open System

This weekend I walked from Mt Robert carpark to Mount Angelus and returned via Hukere Stream to Lakehead staying at Bushline Hut and Angelus Hut.

Department of Conservation mountain huts operate as open systems in that there are no restrictions to who comes and goes. Trampers who do come are free to come and go at will. Although there is a voluntary payment system at DOC mountain huts – the fact of whether you have paid or not does not affect your right to enter the hut and stay in it. One factor which does however affect the system being open is the weather. People are free to walk out into bad conditions but more than often they remain in the

*Cher Williscroft*

hut until it is safe enough to proceed. Other members of the hut system have no authority to control the comings and goings of others who are not in their party. A tramper can, if they are prepared, choose to sleep in a tent or out in the cold in preference to staying in the hut. *One of the attributes of an open system is that members are free to come and go when they choose.*

## In an Open System You Cannot Control the Membership

The weekend we chose to go to Angelus Hut coincided with a long planned trip by local women along the same route. St Arnaud is a tiny village so it soon got around that we were going on the same weekend. I will mention two comments made to me before the trip with respect to the characteristics of open systems. Delia said to me: "Well I suppose the hut is big enough" and the comment from Annie was: "and you're bringing a MAN!" Some of the women were clearly looking forward to an all-women group with people they felt comfortable with and it was likely that they did not want John or I to be there at all.

One of the attributes of an open system is that members are thrown together sometimes against their will. Members do not have any choice as to who they are to be with – this is not under their control. They are forced to accept whoever turns up. However if it is too uncomfortable they are free to leave.

In this situation the two parties were in close proximity to one another – sharing eating, sleeping and socialising space. It is ironic that in an open system you may indeed end up spending intimate space with people who you would not normally choose on this criteria. I will give some examples of this. A couple goes up to Bushline Hut with expectations of a quiet night together in the hills. When they arrive they find 30 noisy high school students in residence. Or imagine bumping into your ex-lover in the supermarket with his/her new partner. *In open systems you cannot control or predict who else will be in the system and by and large you have to get on with them, put up with them, or leave.*

## What is Allowed in an Open System

The atmosphere when we arrived was welcoming. Although in an open system it is quite possible to ignore new-comers, or even be hostile to them (which happens if the hut is already full), on this occasion we received two polite hellos and curious looks from others. *Introductions or other social niceties or rituals are not demanded of members in an open system.* Quite quickly John was talking to other men in the hut about their proposed route, the weather and where they had come from. Conversation centred around the various experiences of being in the mountains, tramping routes, gear, weather and huts. At one point John was talking intensely to a young man and I was moved to ask: "Do you know each other?" I was surprised to find that they had never met before. *This led to the conclusion that it is possible to get quite close to someone in an open system, that open systems do not lack intimacy. It is also possible, however, in the same system to ignore everyone and keep entirely to yourself.*

In both huts there were people with whom we did not exchange words with all evening. Most of those who were there were in friendship or family subgroups. Only one person had come alone. Most subgroups were flexible and while there was some movement between the groups by some individuals, in the case of others they never ventured out of the group they arrived with. A subgroup of four St Arnaud women left 'their' table and joined John and I for short periods, but most remained within their party. Later we joined them for talking and cards and we were easily accepted.

I noticed something interesting that is worth considering in the

context of an open system. When we reached Bushline Hut, John found that Rotoiti Lodge's private cupboard containing billies, stoves and sleeping bags had been broken into, and all the gear was gone. We began an animated conversation which had both the elements of privacy (in that we were acting as if no-one else was interested or involved) and at the same time was totally public (in that everyone had no choice but to listen in, and be warmed up to what we were talking about.) We acted as if the others were not listening, and they also acted as if they weren't hearing or weren't interested. The other people in the hut had made the conclusion that this was a private dialogue. I was surprised that no-one joined in. I concluded that there are only certain subjects which are public property in the culture of mountain huts – i.e. destinations, weather, maps, routes, gear, and food. When these subjects were raised anyone could join in without the need to meta communicate. For instance, John began talking to one person about Bushline Hut burning down 2 years ago. This generated quite a bit of interest from other people who were listening in, who without any meta communication joined in on the conversation. On other subjects the group norms created a culture of discretion and polite distancing. In an open system there is a collective culture which dictates those subjects which are public free-for-alls and those which are private. I will give an example of this attribute of an open system. At the greengrocers last week I was showing a girl two skinks which I

had caught in a jar. Two women in the queue who were strangers to me piped up in a superior way saying: "They are everywhere – there are thousands of them around" – as if to say "Why are you talking about a lousy skink". I remember being



shocked by their nosiness and felt like saying: "Mind your own business – this is between me and my friend.

In an open system there aren't the same controls on speaking that there are in closed systems. People are free to be rude, nosy, obnoxious and bad mannered. The restrictions typical of closed systems around who should speak and when, are lifted. What is seen as inappropriate, rude, going above your station or lack of social graces in a closed system, is allowed in an open system.

I noticed that Jerry had the freedom to alternate between writing a letter, joining the map and compass study, talking, eating or going off to bed all according to his own warm up. *In an open system a person can follow their own warm up and do whatever they like in their own timing. They are not restricted by the rules, or protocols that influence members of closed systems. The greatest restriction in an open system is that of the lack of spontaneity and expression.*

*Department of Conservation, Te Papa Atawhai*

## Roles in the Open System

In an open system certain roles and role relationships get going and other roles become very difficult to maintain. The roles demonstrated *within* parties were to do with developing friendship and intimacy; COMPANION, COACH, PLAYMATE, AFFIRMER. However, the roles *between* parties were those of INFORMATION GIVER, INFORMATION RECEIVER, YARN SWAPPER, BRAGGER and MOUNTAIN GUIDE OF THE YEAR. There were many "been there done that" conversations which left me bored and irritated due to the symmetrical role system, and the lack of intimacy it produced. I was noticing that certain roles were underdeveloped such as social investigator, and metacommunicator. There was little genuine and empathic interest in the other person displayed. Active listening was the precursor to self-listening. I will give an example of this in relation to a conversation I had with a man who had left his 6 month old baby at home with his wife because the child was too little to bring into the hills. I found myself biting my lips with some difficulty, because I was bursting to be a SUPERIOR BRAGGER, by telling him that we had come up to Angelus in the winter with our daughter Milly when she was only 9 weeks old. Instead I became a social investigator and found out a little more about his value system. The over-use of the role of TELLER OF BEST MOUNTAIN

STORY OF THE YEAR produced a competitive and repetitive dynamic. In contrast to me, John became stimulated by the information which is passed around. He adds the information to his reservoir of knowledge about the hills of NZ and uses it to stay alive. John enters into this culture with an animation and enthusiasm that he often lacks in other social gatherings.

## Conclusions

Open systems are those systems where people are free to come and go at will. People cannot control the membership of open systems and they are forced to accept whoever turns up or leave. In an open system there are few external rules or protocols affecting how people behave. There is a free choice to do as they please. The main restrictions placed on people come from the cultural norms and belief systems that they bring with them around expressiveness. The roles that develop between party members differ from those enacted within the party itself. Roles between parties are mostly to do with information giver and receiver to do with routes, weather and gear. Roles within parties were about sharing an adventure with friends.

## Part B
# Analysis of a Closed System

## Introduction

The organisation analysed is typical of many small scale professional partnerships such as accountants, doctors, lawyers, veterinary surgeons and engineers who come together to provide a service primarily for profit. In this scenario the partnership began in 1983 with three partners and today five partners employ four 'lay' staff. The growth of business has meant that the informal 'family' business structures which worked well for years, are now inadequate. The partners have not attended to their relationships, direct confrontation over difficulties is avoided, and there is a lack of group cohesion. There is a growing disharmony in the relationships between professional and 'lay' staff resulting in an unhappy and grumpy atmosphere. Large gaps are also found in managing staff, leadership and decision making, and quality assurance.

For the purposes of publishing this paper I have re-named the organisation the Ocean Legal Centre. Paragraphs in italics signify conclusions I have made about closed systems from the observation and analysis.

I will describe the Ocean Legal Centre as an example of an organisation that operates as a closed system. It is closed on the basis that the attendance of members is based on certain criteria, i.e. partnership agreement, employment contracts and job descriptions. Staff are under

expectations to stay at work for specified hours, to work according to their job descriptions, and to follow their employers instructions. Staff and partners are not able to come and go from the workplace at will. Furthermore partners and staff are expected to show loyalty to the organisation and work toward making it profitable.

I will conclude by identifying the attributes of a closed system as discovered through analysing the Ocean Legal Centre.

*A closed system is one where the membership is restricted and members are unable to come and go at will.*

## Background

George, a partner in the practice had become aware of staff complaints and illness. He put the problem down to the 'stress' due to high demands on the professional staff. George recommended to his partners that my company, Conflict Management Ltd, conduct an evening with the purpose of '*having a full discussion about how the workplace is operating from everyone's viewpoint.*'

This analysis is the result of four meetings.

1. The first was a preliminary interview with George where I defined the purpose of our work, and asked questions about the sociometry of the firm, decision making, leadership and management structures operating.
2. This was followed by a meeting with the staff and partners as a group. The purpose of this meeting was to identify those forces that assisted the team to work well together, and those forces that work against teamwork, and to put into place any changes that would improve the group's functioning. During

the evening the staff set out sociograms of the team, they role reversed with members of the team, and talked directly to each other about what is working in their communication and what is troubling them in their communication. Decisions were made to improve team cohesion and communication.
3. Next we met with the 'lay' staff to get an open system of communication going amongst themselves and between them and their bosses.
4. We have also since worked with the partners to improve their management structure and define their roles and responsibilities.

## People in the Organisation

Four partners operate two Legal Centres, one based in the suburb of Totara, and the other in Riverville. George has sole charge of Totara Legal Centre with a legal secretary and office worker. The three other partners Susan, Alan and Liam work at Riverville Legal Centre with three 'lay' staff. Susan, George and Alan have worked together for years, and for the last seven years they have operated the business partnership. Liam was bought in as a 'new' partner two years ago. Gina was employed as an office worker at Riverville Legal Centre seven years ago when the new partnership began. Two years ago she was joined by Nita who works as a legal secretary and Sally who is a receptionist. Recently they have employed another school leaver part time office assistant.

## How the Work Load is Managed

The lawyers believe because they share profits they should be equally involved in all aspects of managing

the business. In reality some lawyers work harder than others. Liam is resentful that he does more work than Alan and that he is often doing the time consuming cases which take him outside normal hours. Susan and

> *In an open system members look more broadly for solutions to the inner conflicts produced by doing a distasteful task or being bored. They are not bound to work according to a job description, they can go elsewhere, direct their requests to openly helpful people, refuse to do something and chose to do those things that they enjoy. There is more free choice in an open system.*

George also think that Alan is selfish, and selective about his work. They think he does only those tasks he likes best, thereby avoiding the more time consuming case loads. Alan is defensive about this because he thinks that his work with the smaller clients is equally difficult and important. He holds the belief that each lawyer should do what they are confident to do, and what they have the experience to do.

*These tensions of equal pay for equal work are influenced by the fact that this is a small closed system where decisions about who does what are not allocated according to what each person naturally warms up to, but by a system of fairness, shoulds and oughts. This causes inner tension which in a closed system is coped with by avoidance, over burdening of unwilling people, and a consequent emphasis on fairness, justice and equality.*

A further example of how, in a closed system, the natural warm up of individuals is over-ruled by job requirements is evidenced by how the office staff avoided reception. Up until recently the job descriptions of the 'lay' staff were written in a general way so that each staff member was able to do the work of each other. The office workers drift away from the front desk leaving phones ringing for inordinate lengths of time because they do not like to interrupt the lawyers who are often grumpy and unapproachable. The receptionists direct the calls to the lawyer they perceive to be most 'receptive'. Liam is consistently the most approachable and therefore the office staff direct most of the telephone enquiries to him. This further increases his workload and frustration. On one day when all the lawyers were busy and irritable, the office staff drew straws to choosing who would approach a lawyer.

*In an open system members look more broadly for solutions to the inner conflicts produced by doing a distasteful task or being bored. They are not bound to work according to a job description, they can go elsewhere, direct their requests to openly helpful people, refuse to do something and chose to do those things that they enjoy. There is more free choice in an open system. In a closed system, members employ tactics of avoidance, subversion or subterfuge in order to do the work*

*they find most enjoyable or avoid work they dislike.*

## How Conflict is Dealt with Amongst Partners

The professional staff have difficulty in relating to each other particularly regarding sensitive issues like the different hourly contributions Alan makes to the business and how much time partners are working in lunch hours, evenings and weekends. Susan in particular withdraws from direct confrontation with Alan and complains to George and other lay staff about his behaviour. Susan and George are afraid of the unpleasantness that may result if they tell Alan clearly what they are upset about. When George (on behalf of Susan) confronted Alan some years ago, tempers got hot and Alan made the counter accusation that Susan was the slack one. Since then George and Susan are both guarded and indirect with Alan. In short they avoid the tricky issues.

*This complaining, scapegoating, nit picking and fear of confrontation is typical of a closed system. In an open system there is less fear of open communication. In a closed system there is fear and caution. In an open system where people can come and go at will there is less concern about offending someone. For instance at a taxi stand I have seen people become quite abusive of each other. This pussy footing around each other for fear of causing offence is an attribute of a closed system. Conflict is dealt with by means of winners and losers, avoidance, accommodation, back stabbing or complaining.*

## How Conflict is Dealt with Amongst Staff

Gina by virtue of her age and experience considers herself the unofficial office 'senior'. Nita and Sally are twenty or so years her junior. Nita and Sally have a strong relationship with one another making a subgroup of two who communicate easily. This leaves Gina isolated. Gina criticises the two other women for being inefficient and slack, and distances herself from them – an interesting mirror of the tensions amongst the partners described earlier. The two younger women find Gina difficult, bossy, unhelpful, superior, defensive and territorial.

*In a closed system complaints generate counter complaints – the problem is often to do with someone else. Complaints appear to be circular and have the effect of fragmenting the team and causing paranoia and distrust.*

A particular complaint was that Gina doesn't show others how to use the computer systems, and is obstructive when asked for assistance. In a closed system people seek limited solutions to these sorts of difficulties. In an open system Sally might seek computer training elsewhere or look further afield for help. In this closed system she looks only to Gina to teach her and becomes frustrated when Gina does not co-operate.

Gina's abilities are turned against her co-workers making a competitive dynamic. She exercises her authority by control, superiority and put downs.

*In a closed system territories get defined and protected and the growing abilities of co-workers are seen as a threat to the ownership of the territory. In an open system there is greater access to a wide range of people and members can seek people who show respect for achievements. Therefore there is not such a need to guard or jealously protect territory.*

## How the Lawyers Respond to Pressure

The lawyers are experiencing an increasing work load, cramped working conditions, more staff to organise, increasing complexity in the market, and the need to be constantly available to clients. Lawyers compete to use computer terminals to access files. They are also pressured by the fact that a new legal practice is soon to be opened nearby by a competitor. Each lawyer responds to the challenge differently. Liam warms up to being an overburdened work horse then gets withdrawn and sullen. He eats his lunch in the car with the windows wound up. He harbours resentment toward Alan. George and Susan sympathise with him. They all withdraw from Alan. George becomes the distant worried social worker who listens to everyone's problems. Alan becomes a grumpy malingerer who avoids work by arguing that he hasn't the experience to take on the large clients.

There is an atmosphere of being on the back foot with respect to new demands – that events are overtaking the partners and they cannot keep up. When the situation gets overwhelming one of the lawyers (usually George) will rise up at a meeting to meet the challenge and attempt to pull the others out of the abyss. Good intentions are forged, quick decisions are made, solutions found and for a short time all is well. George warms up to being a visionary/Messiah who will resolve the problems for once and for all. Susan becomes an over-enthusiastic busy bee. Alan reluctantly resolves to be more involved but keeps himself apart. Liam enters into the plan enthusiastically but with an edge of cynicism. They end up with a long list of things to do, are very enthusiastic for a while, and then as the day to day pressure increases they get hopeless and the good intentions vanish.

This rising up and giving up causes considerable internal pressure, which the lawyers describe as 'stress'. When this pattern repeats itself over a period of time it produces lack of motivation, nit-picking, scapegoating and a general air of hopelessness, alternating with determined effort. In meetings there is a constant warming up and warming down, as someone would rise up to express an idea, only to loose it as soon as someone rose up with a new idea. Ideas at meetings are like balloons constantly rising and bursting.

*Due to the fact that the lawyers are in a closed system they are bound to stay there and sort it out. The alternative would be considerable financial and professional loss. In an open system the individuals would have more freedom to come and go at will and form other relationships which produce spontaneity.*

## How the Staff Deal with Pressure

The lay staff feel the pressure of either not having any direction, or having too much direction from too many bosses. Up until recently they have not had employment contracts or job descriptions. They have had four bosses making it difficult to get answers to simple staff issues such as holidays. In response to the external and internal pressure described above, the lay staff alternate between loyalty, and wanting to leave. There will be a spate of illness and unhappiness followed by enthusiasm for the organisation. Nita gets to be worried and anxious about her future, and Gina gets possessive about her territory. Sally complains

about Gina to George and Nita. They all seek strong and consistent leadership in the lawyers, but fail to accept their own authority. When there is a heavy workload they approach the lawyers with reluctance. They withdraw from both Alan and Liam, and pussy foot around Susan. They do not take the lead easily and are constantly referential to the lawyers. This causes considerable frustration in both the lay staff and the lawyers.

*In this closed system some people are designated leader while others are subordinate. Subordinates can only look to those designated 'leader' for guidance and authority. The roles are not exchangeable or flexible so that a subordinate would not naturally exercise leadership in situations when it is called for. In an open system there is less rigidly defined roles. You can look many places for leadership, reject leadership and exercise your own ability to lead and manage.*

## Sociometric Links

George has a central sociometric position in the organisation based on his roles of social worker, visionary, and organiser. In his position of sole charge of the Ocean Legal Centre he is in a unique position to observe his colleagues and to hear about the difficulties in Riverville. He takes the role of watchful concerned father who steps in at times to sort things out.

Gina has weak links with all staff except Alan. Alan's only positive relationship in the organisation is with Gina. They have good discussions. When put in the context of the links the professionals have with each other the significance of the relationship between Alan and Gina becomes clear. They are in a sub-group of companions in a world of people who don't understand or appreciate them. They are isolated from the rest of the staff on the basis of being misunderstood, different from, and at odds with the others. In this organisation two people with weak links with others make strong links with each other.

*Two people forming a sub-grouping like this is more likely to occur in a closed system than an open one. In a closed system staff seek allies and compatriots within the organisation. In an open system one could seek understanding and companionship from other people outside the organisation.*

## Leadership and Decision Making

The blocks in the communication are exacerbated by the fact that the lawyers have partners meeting as infrequently as three monthly. These meetings are, according to George, the correct forum to make decisions that affect the partnership. However, it is not uncommon for decisions to be made unilaterally by one partner without consultation with the others. No one lawyer takes responsibility for convening meetings or running meetings. There is no partner responsible for staff issues. The partners demonstrated their discomfort with taking leadership by acting as if they do not want to take the lead. Making tentative suggestions is common, and there is a lack of follow through. Consequently decision making is weakened and peer confidence does not build.

*This dynamic is influenced by the fact that this is a small closed system where showing initiative is suspect and taking the lead may be judged as superior behaviour. Members do not act in a self directed way or become authorities and the group gets pulled down to the lowest level of*

*operating. In an open system those with leadership ability come forward to lead, or are sought out to lead by others in the system. There is much more allowing of people to lead and show initiative.*

## Conclusion

Ocean Legal Centre is a closed system based on the fact that people are not free to come and go at will. By analysing the organisation I have identified certain attributes of a closed system.

## Attributes of a Closed System

1. The tensions between what one has to do as part of one's job and what one would like to do is resolved by some members using tactics of subversion, avoidance and malingering and others becoming overburdened. Moral issues such as fairness of contribution and equality become much discussed topics. There is complaining about laziness, selfishness and zealousness.

2. There is concern that direct confrontation will cause offence and result in a fight. Conflicting styles of work and work values are dealt with by indirect complaining, scapegoating, nit-picking, avoidance (or pussy-footing around), back-stabbing, triangling, or ganging up. This results in a competitive fragmented team, where there is an atmosphere of paranoia and distrust.

3. Members seek solutions within the closed system to problems they face and come up with a paucity of options. Solutions become in-grown and often the simple solution is the preferred one. Territory is to be guarded jealously because it is believed that here are limited resources which cannot go around everyone. Therefore all members cannot get their needs met within the system.

4. Self directedness is not encouraged. Instead leadership is exercised by either rising up, taking control and being superior alternating with a giving up and hopelessness.

Roles such as leader/ subordinate are inflexible regardless of the natural warm up which exists. Those who take initiative are either suspect (acting in a superior way), or expected to be the saviour.

# Sociodrama with Juvenile Offenders

**Rollo Browne**

*Rollo Browne is an organisational consultant based in Sydney. He has worked with boys and masculinity issues for a number of years.*

This article focuses on the lead up to and the enactment of a sociodrama with juvenile offenders who have committed serious crimes. It highlights the need for flexibility in managing the group warm up, finding the appropriate structure and recognizing the underlying theme of the group. One clear conclusion is that keeping the sociodramatic question in mind is an effective way of grounding the learning for the participants.

## They Won't Work On Their Personal Situations

In a secure room in a juvenile detention centre, five boys, aged between 12 and 16, and four adults -  the unit psychologist, two youth workers and me as visiting director - are working in twos and threes. The large number of adults present is to prevent possible violence.  This is the second of six voluntary 60 - 75 minute sessions. There is nothing breakable in the room, no sharp edges and the chairs are plastic. The walls are a grubby pastel green. There is nothing to tear, no posters, no carpet. Nothing comfortable. Nothing homely. There is a television set high in a corner. All doors, windows and peepholes are security locked at all times. All the adults, except me, have keys. The single external window overlooks some grass and a brick wall. Despite this, the mood is purposeful.

Psychodrama is one of a sequence of alternate therapies being trialled to see what might prove effective. I have been asked to work with the boys on the understanding that they are not able or not prepared to discuss their internal worlds. The preliminary briefing with the psychologist clearly indicated that the boys would get aggressive or just walk out if expected to enact their personal situations. I learn that their self-appointed leader and spokesperson is Nod, that all the boys are afraid of Steve and that they all aspire to be successful 'crims'. These boys are all from the unit for the emotionally disturbed. They have done some awful things that I am not told about as it is not directly relevant to the program.

## "Russell would do it"

The previous program used drama therapy where the underlying purpose was to expand the boys' social empathy to include those who are were affected by their crimes. The centerpiece of the work was the scripting and acting out of a courtroom drama in costume. In a stroke of brilliance the drama therapist had

invited the boys to get involved because they would learn how to act. The boys were well aware that some crims had achieved notoriety and a career in film. In their sessions the boys accepted participating in warm ups when told that *"It's exactly what Russell Crowe would do before acting in a scene."*

Taking this warm up into account, I have thought carefully about how to present myself and the purpose of the sessions to the boys.

**Session 1**
For the first session I set up a circle of chairs. The boys file in, alert, curious, with some displaying defensive bravado. They are checking out the newcomer. I introduce myself and make a brief statement about our work, comparing it to playing the game of life. I say, *"I am the head coach in the game of life and I do this all the time for a living. You do not play the game very well or you wouldn't be here. As well, there is the game of surviving in jail because that is also your life now".*

I ask everyone to stand in a circle. All the adults participate but two boys sit watching from a corner. I begin the circle game 'Find the Leader' without instructions. This involves the group mirroring the movements of a designated leader. The person in the middle doesn't know who the leader is and has to figure out who is actually leading the gestures and movement in the group.

Director, *"Everyone stand like Steve is standing"*. We all take up his posture.
Steve, immediately ... *"I don't like this"* ... looking around tensely.
Director, to everyone ... *"Do what Steve just did"*.
Steve, *"Why are you copying me?"* ... more tense.
Director, *"Let's copy Jack (youth worker) now"*.

I realise that I have begun the mirroring playfully and with good humour but without setting out the structure of the game. These boys need more

safety in order to play well. This is a classic example of spontaneity dissipating when there is no adequate structure. I explain the rules further and the game progresses more easily. I begin to feel more solid as the leader. The boys involved focus on enjoying the game.

A couple of turns later I link the game to our work.
Director, *"This is important because when you walk into a room and see things going on you need to work out who the leader is".*
Nod responds immediately.
Nod, *"I'm the leader".*
Director, *"Then the next thing is to learn how to pass the leadership over."*
Nod looks thoughtful

The boys must be feeling safer because at the next activity two more join in. Shortly afterwards one is removed for being disruptive. He has continually sniped at Nod to the point of upstaging him. Nod is cool about it as it reinforces his status. So the issue of power between the boys is present although unspoken.

The session closes with a good feeling in the room. I realise that the boys mainly want to be taken seriously and be treated with respect.

My experience of the first session taught me a lot. I know that the boys are not a unified group except in opposition to authority. Their level of trust and personal responsibility is low. A central theme of the group is focused on who has power and how it is exerted.

**Session 2**
A week later there are six boys and four adults in attendance. I have decided to work sociodramatically with the issue of power, setting out scenes that involve people like the participants.

After the warm up games, I use photos to focus the boys on what it means to be powerful [1]. They select and briefly speak about the photos they have chosen. Three of them co-operate in sorting these photos into themes and give them titles to name the kind of power that is represented.

We then move to a team tag game called 'Cat and Mouse'. This requires one team to select a controller who issues instructions to their blindfolded cat about how to catch the other team's blindfolded mouse. The controller of the second team meanwhile directs the mouse to escape. The game involves developing trust - trusting someone to keep you safe and tell you what to do when you cannot see - and the ability to cope with change. This activity thus involves the transfer of power between participants.

Both teams keep to the rules and a sense of childlike delight emerges, although no-one remarks upon this. The boys' ability to enter the role of trusting participant is limited, but they do respond positively when the controller roles are changed at short notice. One participant who has not spoken at all, and whose strategy is to get others to do his thinking for him, is suddenly given the task of controller and participates satisfactorily. I link this game to real life situations where we all need to know that we can trust others so that we can participate in the game of life.

Thus far we have focused on participation, trust and the experience of power. The group has warmed up to action, to thoughtfulness, to playfulness, to my leadership and to the idea that the games do mirror life in some way. It seems to me that the boys are not concerned with the purpose of the group, as long as they are not expected to play 'baby games'. After this game they are watchful and curious.

**The Move to Action**

I form the group into adult-adolescent pairs and ask them to draw comparative pictures of 'a good youth worker and 'a bad youth worker'. The emphasis here is on a structured warm up with explicit instructions, as I realise that the boys do not have adequate roles for a discussion group. Safety is enhanced with strong structure.

This session is drawing more on the boys' life experience but from the safe distance of the social role of the youth worker. The boys have strong opinions about the youth workers who have power over their lives, and thus the issue of power is being carried forward into the sociodrama. I have inferred a sociodramatic question which I do not share with the group, as I consider my articulation overly conceptual. The sociodramatic question is *"How can we have a healthy relationship with power in a detention centre?"*

After completing the drawings, the participants sit in a semi circle and I announce that we are going to create a scene. Each group shares their thinking about the actions of a bad youth worker. I make an assessment of the sociometry in the group and choose the boy most likely to respond positively. Nod is the self-appointed leader and he is well warmed up to drama. I judge that his participation will be essential to involving the other boys in the group.

Director, *"What did you come up with Nod?"*
Nod, *"Runnin' boys into the lock up. Bang, whooshka ... really bad eh!"* ... looks gleefully around at others.

**Setting out the System: Scene 1**
Director, *"Let's set out where they are and what the bad youth worker does. You come out and be one of the youth workers. Set the scene. What's in front of you?"*
Nod, *"Metal door ... a concrete step you sort of trip over and the wall in front".*

Director, *"Now pick someone to be another bad youth worker"*. Pat is chosen and comes out.
*"OK, get someone to be the kid in trouble"*. Nod looks around. The other boys shake their heads. Nod, *"What about you Col?"* Col, the psychologist, comes out.

Unsurprisingly no-one wants to be the victim. This is too much like real life. The psychologist has the strongest relationship with the boys and will hold his ground without losing his temper. I ask Nod to select an auxiliary to play the role of another bad youth worker. Adolescents frequently become self-consciousness, isolated and resistant when a spotlight is trained on them. I thus get multiple auxiliaries to represent a single role.

Director, *"We are going to do this in slow motion so that nobody gets hurt"*.

Slow motion is a device to ensure the safety of the group. The potential for violence is present in the room. Firm direction helps contain it.

Director, *"Okay. Act out what happens"*.
The three auxiliaries slowly enact the throwing of a boy into the lock up. They trip him and run him into the step 'by accident'. A lot of energy in the scene, delight and laughter.

Director, *"Freeze there. Now, as the youth worker, what's the important thing here?"*
Nod as bad YW, *"This little bastard needs teaching a lesson. He's not going to learn any other way"*.
Pat as bad YW, *"Yeah"* ... big smile ... *"We'll show him who's boss"*.
Director, *"OK. Thanks. That's the first scene. You guys sit down for a while"*.

I end the first scene there. I realise I have made a mistake. The boys' refusal to take on the role of the victim has distracted me from the sociodramatic question. I need to link this scene

to our purpose by asking: *"What is the effect on this boy of this form of power? What is he learning about power?"* With Col in the role of victim, it would have been an opportune time to pose this question to the boys.

As I end the scene I am aware that the youth workers have not said anything yet. However, they are not my main concern even though they are an important influence in the boys' lives and can make or break much of the progress made. My purpose is to create a functioning group and to keep broadening the conversation through enactment. There is a sense in the room that something 'real' has been created. The boys are being taken seriously. This is positive.

The roles that have been enacted thus far are somewhat stereotypical. The boys have not personally involved themselves in the characters, although Nod's image of a bad youth worker is probably drawn from his experience. I note that playfulness, although still somewhat sadistic, is high, and cooperation and willingness to participate is good. I could introduce a new element here by setting up a panel of lawyers. I could bring the bad youth worker's own children onto the stage, or even the boy's parents. My instinct tells me that it will be better to stay with the boys' existing stories. Without further role development in the group, these scenes are likely to produce further stereotyped roles. I drop these possibilities and simply choose to bring the next scene onto the stage.

**Scene 2**
Director, *"Now let's see a good youth worker"*. Pat looks at Steve and points at him. Pat knows something might be on. *"What did you have Steve?"*
Steve, *"There was this youth worker lady who gave the guys head-jobs"* ...greasy grin ... *"Before I came"*.
Pol, YW, sharply ...*"You're in fantasyland"*.
Director, *"We're working on what you think a good*

*youth worker is from your experience".*
Steve   *"Oh ... OK"* ... thinks ...

This direction makes the warm up more directly personal to Steve and at the same time he is not required to put himself on stage.

Director, *"In your experience what does a good youth worker do?"*
Steve, takes breath, quietly to self ... *"I can do this"* ... to group ... *"I've got one ... it's about you Nod"* ... sees suspicious look from Nod ... *"It's a good one"* ... defensively.

This is unusual. The group becomes alert, interested. Steve has chosen to create a scene involving someone else in the group. It is no longer at arms length.

Director, *"OK. Set the scene. You be a typical good youth worker. Where are you?"*
Steve as good YW, *"I'm coming to work. I've got something for Nod".*
Director, *"Put something under your arm. Where's Nod?"*
Steve as good YW, *"In his room".*
Director, *"Set up the room over here".* Steve does so methodically. *"Now you be Nod. Are you sitting on the bed? At the desk with your head on your arms. What's going on Nod? Turn your head to the side and say what's happening".*
Steve as Nod, *"I feel pissed off and sorry. That computer program is stuffed and I can't get it working".*
Director, *"Now you pick someone to be Nod"* ...picks Pat ... *"and you become the good youth worker again. Pick up what you had under your arm and stand outside the door. Pat, you sit at the table like you saw. Go ahead youth worker. Do what you do".*
Steve as good YW, *"Hey there. I got something for ya".*
Director, *"Reverse roles".* Auxiliary enacts youth worker.
Steve as Nod, ... lifts head blearily ... *"What?"*

Director, *"Reverse roles".* Auxiliary enacts Nod.
Steve as good YW, *"A computer loaded with that program you wanted".*
Director, *"Reverse roles".* Pat as auxiliary refuses. *"Too much moving about".*  He sits down.
Steve as Nod, ... turns his head away, feeling is heightened, mutters to himself ... *"How can I ever repay you?"* ...  poignant silence.
Director, after a longish pause. *"Okay. Let's hold it there".*

This is a critical moment in the drama. Steve has taken up the role of scene creator very well. The concretisation has assisted him to warm up to the story he has in mind. Through role reversal he has warmed up to the experience of being treated with kindness.

Steve has warmed up to something in himself and he is probably surprised by this. This is also the first moment of deep feeling in the group and, although some may not have noticed it, I want to allow room for it. The warm up to the personal and to the social are running hand in hand. I know that this depth of feeling is not yet discussable. I do the next best thing and value the moment in an unhurried, warm silence. The group is not impatient to move on. Steve has time to gather himself. I know that the warm up to feeling is important to the psychologist. One of his goals is to assist Steve to build his capacity for empathy. Without engendering self-pity, the enactment has highlighted the deeply affecting nature of kindness. Steve is enacting a progressive role that can be normalized over time. Deep feeling, no matter how quickly covered up, is a part of sociodrama.

In retrospect, I realise that this key moment presented another opportunity to link the work back to the sociodramatic question. *"What effect does this use of power have on this boy? What is he learning about power in this scene?"*

As I pause the action, I am conscious that the session must end soon. Good time boundaries are part of the leadership contract. I move to a final scene where two systems are enacted. I aim to assist the boys to make meaningful sense of what they have created so far.

**Looking At the System as a Whole**
Director, *"Now let's have the bad youth workers back here with Col as the boy"*. They reassemble. *"Look over at the good youth worker. What do you reckon is happening there?"*
Nod as bad YW, *"Load of bullshit"*.
Pat as bad YW, *"Doesn't matter"*.
Director, *"Don't you like what he's doing?"*
Nod as bad YW, *"S'alright"*.
Director, *"Now you two go over there and be the good youth worker. Look back over here at what is happening to this boy. What do you have to say to these youth workers"*.
Nod as good YW, to director ... *"What can you say?"* ... thoughtful pause.

Both scenes are portrayed on stage. I am struck by the maturity of the role Nod takes up in accepting that there are times when nothing can be said. He is being himself as the youth worker. Pat, playing the role of the good youth worker, is unable to mirror Nod's thoughtfulness. It would be a significant spontaneity challenge for Pat to speak in role. I decide not to 'push the river' and instead make a systemic statement about the work, linking it back to real life. I am pressured by time and I trust that the experience has affected them. For the moment the group is focused and coherent. Role development is progressive. There will be another session next week. I want to value the progress made and wrap it up for now.

**Closing**
Director, *"Look around at the whole scene. Notice what we have created. Sometimes there is nothing you can say but it doesn't stop you doing what you*

*can. Thank you. We'll stop there"*.

In a final scene such as this, I would normally let my curiosity loose and investigate how two opposing groups of youth workers co-exist, how it is that some workers belong in both groups and what effects this scenario has on the boys. However, I know that the boys must develop a stronger sense of self and be capable of personal reflection to address such questions. As well, they would need to have developed trust in me over time. Trust must be earned in a detention centre. We are not yet at this stage.

On reflection, I realise that it would have been more effective to link the boys' experience back to the sociodramatic question again. "What makes the difference between good and bad uses of power?" However, in the event there is no time to consciously integrate the work. The group moves directly into 'milk and milo' and we hang out for five minutes before I leave for the post-session debrief with the unit psychologist.

**Conclusion**
The boys are learning about the nature of power and how it shapes their responses to their own situations. The issue of power is always to the fore in a detention centre, and therefore a significant factor in my directorship of the group. I realise that a more conscious use of the sociodramatic question would have assisted the boys' learning. I do not expect them to analyse and intervene in their own social system. They do not yet have the personal and social roles to do this.

In the role of Nod, Steve experienced some 'action-insight' but I do not know how well he is able to learn from this experience. The boys, particularly Nod, took pleasure in depicting the 'bad youth workers' and warmed up to a greater level of spontaneity. Although this is their world,

they are not yet in a position to reconfigure their responses. This is, after all, why they are in detention.

I cannot be sure that the boys have a clearer picture of the social system in the detention center as a result of the enactments. But I do know that the focus on the value of kindness, shared by all the participants in the group, is new, even though it is not normally admitted. Kindness is a form of power. The group has been more playful and the enactments have engendered spontaneity. From my perspective, the most significant thing is the ongoing development of this group. Through the warm up and the sociodrama the boys, the attendant professionals and I have managed the power issues so that a workable group has emerged. We have been working on real issues from the boys' collective experience. Our next task is to build on this development.

14

# Working with Indigenous Community Leaders in Cape York

## Diz Synnot and Peter Howie

*Diz is a Sociodramatist and Peter is a Psychodramatist and TEP. Both are on staff at the Queensland Training Institute of Psychodrama, which along with their successful organisation consulting business is now a part of the Moreno Collegium for Human Centred Learning, Research and Development.*

Over the past 4 years we have been running an 8 day Cape York Strategic Leaders Program in far North Queensland. The purpose is to work with leaders from remote indigenous communities in Cape York and so liberate their capacities to use their wisdom, experience and knowledge in an active and potent manner. We actively: apply the principle of spontaneity (Spontaneity rules!); reduce isolation between participants by building relationships; enlarge individual functioning and create and enjoyable learning-rich environments.

The program consists of a 5 day and 3 day residential program with around 25 participants from 5 or 6 remote communities. We seek to have a range of leaders attend - the Police Sergeants, the Directors of Nursing and local health workers, the Mayors, the community's General Managers, the School Principals, Justice Co-ordinators, community police, councillors and other formal and informal leaders. Usually 5 or so from each community attend. Sometimes people return to the subsequent programs with other colleagues from their community.

One thing that strikes us is that each community is unique in terms of its indigenous cultures, the language groups and connections with the land; and its colonial history which we would suggest is still in operation. So it is a complicated matter to have people from different communities. While there are clear connections and a pride in their differences, these differences are quite substantial.

### Creating a Unified Warm Up

We do things at the beginning to create a unification of the group. One thing that works very well, perhaps an hour or two into the first session, is the focus: *"What is your country?"* and *"What is your first language?"* (Asking an indigenous person "what is your country" refers not to a national identity but to an identity forged between themselves and "their land." It is a personal relationship). We set it out dramatically on the stage. We then hear from each person.

In one program a man immediate warms up to being beaten all through his school life whenever he spoke his language. He now doesn't have the capacity to talk his own language and it's a very conflicted state for him to be even in a learning environment at all. Nevertheless he claims the language he doesn't speak. Everybody claims their first language although some people have two or three first languages.

The rest of the group warms up to this enactment.

We can think of it psychodramatically as self-presentation where there is an implicit role reversal by other participants. One of the things we've noticed in many indigenous cultures is that there's naturally an amount of space around a self-presentation which is very different to our Western culture. It appears they've had it forever. It could look to a Westerner that the group is going very slowly. But the full depth of what a person is bringing forward is apprehended somatically by the listener. It's obvious with the nonverbal responsiveness in the group

The group warms up strongly to each person telling their own story and in response to that there's space and a physical ingestion of what is being brought forward and the depth of it. We can't remember one superficial story being told.

There's an immediacy of living in the moment that's just right there. A depth of meeting really that, of itself, is a blossoming. It's not a prelude to something else.

When things get set out, we see that someone has lived in one place their whole life and speaks four local languages, and there are others who've lived in many places and have even more languages. Nobody only speaks only one language. Some have 7 or 8 languages. Setting this out in this way is an intervention in the group and of itself it's quite a powerful thing. It assists participants to go beyond their assumptions about each other, to know a bit more about their colleague as a person and in that process they start to become real.

Listening to history is an intervention in the group culture. It is a presentation of that person, not just historic. If we don't invite that to be set out it's very unlikely it will become known in the group. This process is a way of a lot getting known about a lot of people, creating a rich group picture. We get to create a picture of who we each are as a basis for working more together. A lot of people don't know about each other even though they live close together.

There's something about the process in the group that requires people to engage and if you do that enough in an easy enough way without too many overloads, people get to know each other and begin to feel good. We had a group of women that worked in the same community, distributing Government money paid for the children - one of the experiments being tried - but they barely knew each other. They actually created a firm friendship.

So we build the sociometry in an active way. As a result other things come out, not so obvious to us but obvious to others. Like *"there's my relative there who I'm not allowed to speak to"*. 'Poison cousins' is the white term. It's more complex that that - another woman says *"you may not realise it but I'm not allowed to pass in front of that person or speak before they do"*. The formal or hard-wired sociometry, the socio-telic (or maybe family-telic) does influence the informal sociometry a lot.

## A Sociodramatic Exploration of Community Complexity

As mentioned, the Indigenous communities of the Cape York Peninsula are very complex social organisations. This complexity means getting a clear picture of the place is difficult for local as well as outsiders. In one program Diz realised that the group needed to have a future orientation or a future vision that took one another into account. She thought that the participants were focused on overcoming present day obstacles and that the future was simply "Tomorrow is today without today's problems" such as "Free of violence" or "No alcoholism" or "Safe children". These types of visions, according to Fred Emery, a world famous Australian psychologist, systems thinker and organisation developer, are caught in today's view of things, the current paradigms, the current pictures and operating worldviews and they are predominantly problem solving exercises (for an overview of Emery's work see Bawden, 1999). However, if we reflect a moment, our own experience will remind us that the way things are being done today were

barely beginning 20 years ago. For example, the service industry boom, sexual equality, and flexible work place practices and so on.

Fred Emery wanted people to develop a vision that started from the future and worked back to the present rather than starting from the present then going forward. This requires an imaginative leap. Seeing the need for such an imaginative leap is important in a community. Deciding to take that leap into the future and having others follow is real leadership. However, as General Douglas Macarthur said *"The planning is everything, the plan is nothing"*. It is in the hurly-burly of developing an agreed, workable, visionary future that accounts for motivating factors as well as reactive forces that the real work of being human gets done and participants see the humanness, commonality and creativity of each other. The following is a description of a session run in the morning of second day of a residential three day follow up program designed to focus on sociodramatic and cultural interventions for these leaders.

## Warm Up

First Diz presents Bob Dick's Onion model of Organisational Culture (2006), see Diagram 1. This is extremely useful for developing identity in a new community organisation. My job is to pay attention to the group and see what could be produced in action as a result of this warm up.

**Diagram 1 : The Onion Model
of Organisational Culture (Dick 2006)**
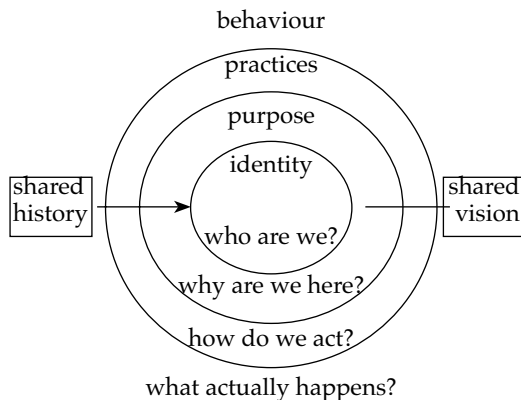


This diagram highlights the insight that shared history affects community identity. Indigenous communities have diverse histories with large common overlaps. This diversity comes from different land groups, different tribal or clan or family groups, different languages and different histories of oppression or support. However the reality of oppression is common. The reality of 'fucked up refugee in own country' experiences are appalling. The reality of being treated as slave labour or free labour is common. This model also highlights that shared vision is essential for a common identity. Diz's analysis was that there was a lack of visioning and a shared vision in many of the participants of the communities we were working with. The shared aspect of a community's vision requires strong relating so as to get over being competitive or self-righteous. In other words, to be able to reverse roles. At its best it engenders an encounter.

As Diz presents this model with numerous examples, there is thoughtful discussion and enquiry. Plenty of head nodding, reaching for note paper to take things down and thoughtful questions. Then a discussion gets going that highlights two different world views - essentially between two subgroups of the educationalists and the health system - that is irresolvable.

This is the move to action. I take the opportunity to produce this and a range of community divisions between world views. Working with these divisions is highly relevant when a leader is trying to create, develop or discover a shared vision in a community.

## Scene 1: The community organisations try and share a vision.

We set out 5 subgroups from the community and the core of their worldview: Education *"For the kids"*; Health *"If they are sick they can't do anything"*; Police *"Without law and order nothing is possible"*; Justice group *"Without justice and fairness nothing will change"* and a Lord Mayor *"We make it all possible around here for workers, for service, for families. Without us - nothing."*

Participants are asked to join a group outside their expertise. I figure the display will be largely stereotyped but will both meet an act hunger and highlight the difficulty of getting to a shared vision. I then present the Diz flower model of shared vision.

**Diagram 2.**
**The Diz flower model of Shared Vision**
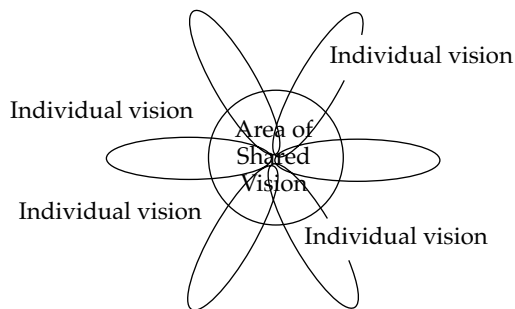


This diagram highlights that there is a likely shared vision and there are also aspects not held in common. Their job as a community is to find the shared aspects and not get stuck on the bits that aren't shared.

As director I use a particular type of interviewing for role, because participants have taken a generic social role rather than being a specific person. I say things that point to a common worldview of the group, for example, *"Well as police you see that Law and Order are crucial for the community to feel safe and happy.....?"*. Participants begin to warm up and respond *"Yeah that's right. We make people feel safe!"* Another says *"And they better get with the law. It is really simple. Do the right thing. That's it!"* They take up the role clearly and enjoy it.

I then ask them all to work as a single community. They take time to warm up in their small groups. They get together, they move around. Eventually they stand in a circle and it starts to look good. Then someone opens their mouth and it all falls apart. Competition emerges, active discouragement of others emerges, domination and rejection occur. I throw in some curve balls such as asking the participant playing the role of school principal to say regularly heard phrase in education circles. *"Well I don't know about*

*all this stuff but its clear to me 'It's for the kids'"*, implying that anyone who doesn't go along with my simplistic motto is not 'for the kids' and is therefore reprehensible and stupid. The actual school principals in the room all chuckle.

I invite participants to, one at a time, express some of the thoughts and responses they have had during this process while in role. A kind of whole group soliloquy. A third of the group responds and all are present.

## Scene 2: Expanding the System
I comment that in the first scene I only had organisational sub-groups. I now ask about family subgroups in one community. We name the specific community and someone says *"Oh! There are about 28 traditional owners."* *"Who is one?"* I ask. They name a person. I ask for others and participants take up the roles of being some of these people.

This time, interviewing for role means that the group members warm up to being a real person that they know. For example, I ask someone playing a traditional owner if there is tension - *"Yes everyone hates me!"* Once enough of the owners are there we begin to expand the system, adding the community police group, the senior public service people back in the Big Smoke - Assistant Police Commissioner; Regional Director for Health; Regional Director of Sport and Recreation; the Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister and his principal policy advisor; some media people seeking juicy stories. I ask them to all develop their shared vision. The sociodramatic question becomes clear "How can such a diverse community develop a shared vision?

Again I add curve balls - the School Principal is leaving at the end of the year, the Police is only there for a few more months, the Prime Minister has a juicy promotion for the Minister if none of this becomes a negative election issue, the school teacher is fresh out of college and is young and motivated and doesn't have a clue. They add in their own curve balls - the Mayor

is busted at a roadblock both drunk and trying to bring alcohol back into a community in his car. So, in one fell swoop, the Mayor who is also a traditional owner now has a criminal record for carrying a six-pack and may technically be unable to hold office. Tempers flare, funny bones are stimulated.

## Deepening the Warm Up

I invite them to notice that they are mostly enacting a stereotypical version of the role they are in. I ask them to notice how easy this is and how inaccurate it also is. Many nod. Many mutter with a grin, *"Yes, that's right"*. I direct them to get to know that the person they are also has a family, friends, becomes isolated, is uncertain, insecure, maybe doing their best. Then I ask them to continue creating a shared vision. Some serious discussions begin. The production continues.

After 15 minutes I pause the action and ask them to say out loud some of the thoughts and responses that are not being enacted. This is done more fully than previously. Some of it is highly amusing, *"You bastards!"*. Some of it is highly poignant, *"I feel like cold water has been thrown over my enthusiasm"*, and some of it is highly personal *"I notice how I find this very hard being a police person"*.

## Scene 3: Federal politician hits a road block.

I direct the participants to choose another role to take up and to swap with that person after a short discussion. Then we continue the current scenario. So some chose and some are chosen which creates a good mix of people outside their comfort zones. Participants take no more than a couple of minutes to get going, make the role their own and ramp it up further.

You may not be aware that road blocks are a new feature in Cape York. Now that take-away alcohol is illegal in some communities there is regular smuggling going on. So police now have to set up road blocks to catch the smugglers. Smuggling grog is very much

frowned upon. For example a state Minister lost her job from bringing in a bottle of red wine on the Government jet.

During the enactment the Minister decides to travel to the community in a four wheel drive convoy. He gets stopped at the road block along with everyone else. He tries to bluff and bluster his way through. Then the traditional owners come along and protest about the lack of protocol and making damn sure he gets the message not to bring in the army to the community (which is what is happening in one Australian state). Ironically it looks like this might be needed to get the Minister out. The media are working hard to really ramp up this story into a national headline - "Minister kidnapped in community - lawlessness follows visit." The confrontation reaches its peak and the scene is concluded.

## Scene 4: "The world works best when..."

I focus participants on the worldview implicit in their role. I ask them to complete the sentence "The world works best when....." and to express this in the group. A range of worldviews emerge. "

> *"The world works best ... when people listen to me."* Minister.
> *"...when people are respectful and follow protocol."* Traditional owners.
> *"...when I can get a salacious story to sell the paper."* Journalist.
> *"...when directions are followed and I am obeyed."* Police.
> *"...when we are left alone to do what we know how to do."* Indigenous Counsellor.

And other similar responses are put forward in a simple manner.

I think of this as the first stage of sharing or debriefing. This process invites participants to immediately make something of what they have been doing and experiencing. It has them practice seeing the systems that others focus on and pay attention too. Doing this from those roles is entirely possible as it is largely an inductive process or some might say intuitive.

Doing it deductively (basing it on deducing the worldview from the data you get from another person) is very difficult for the participants and, indeed, for many people without adequate training, almost impossible.

## Sharing

We sit in a circle. Everyone is invited to respond from themselves or their role. Sharing is profound. The first sharing comes from a community elder and leader and recounts a potted history of his community. *"We were a Lutheran church community before the Second World War ... made up of traditional owners and local people and also children and folks from all over Australia. We had a main language other than English... but we had to close down our community because we were at war with Germany.* (At the outbreak of World War Two, the missionary managing his Missionary community was interned and the people were sent away. Almost 1500 kms south of their community. Nearly a quarter of the people died during the following years from diseases. In spite of these adversities, in 1949 the survivors returned to a new site, and a new mission was formed.) *Later on, we all returned after the war and it got back on track ... Since then Native Title created divisions between the traditional owners and the second and third generation refugees from other places. These divisions continue today and this makes a shared vision both difficult and necessary."*

He then says that the model Diz put up captures completely the dilemmas he and others are facing. Three other elders in the group nod enthusiastically and mutter *"yeah, yeah".* Other sharing comes, including the question, *"Do Traditional Owners actually want to get on together and leave old hurts behind?"* There are reflections on how stereotyping is easy and dangerous. All participants speak. Many share from both the role and from their responses to the enactment and reflections on their community. The level of spontaneity is high.

## Next Day

The next day the value of the sociodrama is clear to see. The participants discuss what it is like to be in the shoes of other people and groups. They are determined to find ways of developing a common or shared vision that includes all the members in their community. This is the work of the day.

The group is still working on the sociodramatic question "How can such a diverse community develop a shared vision?" Our simple answer is: to get into each others shoes and a diverse group can begin to create a common vision. The more role reversal and the better and easier it becomes

One further realisation from our work is that the historic stories aren't shared. Some of the traditional stories are known and shared and these vary from place to place. But the painful stories of oppression are not shared; the pain is kept silent and the silence grows too strong. Some silences give room for growth, life, play, emergence, creativity and expansion. Some silences give support to darkness, loneliness and isolation. Breaking the isolating silences allows new things to begin.

The principal of spontaneity is this. Spontaneity improves everything. Life emerges for spontaneity. The more spontaneity, the more life there is. High spontaneity means serious creativity. The application of Morenian principles in this group has developed spontaneity in the group and individuals and will translate to greater spontaneity in their communities upon their return. Teaching participants' ways to engage in spontaneity raising is one way of seeing our work.

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# Sociodrama with Community Outreach Coordinators

### ROLLO BROWNE

### ABSTRACT

This paper describes a sociodrama conducted for community change-agents working towards a multi-cultural Australia. Amongst the many possibilities for producing a drama, the director must choose action cues to pursue whilst also assisting the group to stay focused on the task at hand. A number of these choice points are discussed. The author focuses on two important factors that guide the director — the clarity of purpose and the analysis made of the subgroups and the subgroup relationships.

### KEY WORDS

sociodrama, director, facilitation, choice points, sub-groups, subgroup relationships, warm up, enactment, integration

## Introduction

As a sociodramatist, I am interested in what it is that guides a director in the moment by moment decision making during the production of a drama. In this article, I describe a sociodrama that I directed during a workshop for community outreach coordinators who are working towards a multicultural Australia. These coordinators operate in a complex political environment with numerous pressures and a wide range of stakeholders, some of whom also attended the workshop.

The task of the director is to shape the exploration and hold a clear purpose within the myriad possibilities that continually present themselves in the unfolding drama.

In this paper I present the background to the workshop, the group warm up and a description of the sociodrama's development. I discuss various choice points in the sociodrama, and identify what it was that influenced my thinking and decisions as the director.

## Background

There are 39 participants and one external facilitator attending the workshop. The participants consist of:

- 19 coordinators of the Australians for Multiculturalism (AFM) program. These coordinators, referred to as AFMs, are strategic change agents from every state and territory in Australia. Their role is to assist the Council for Multicultural Australia to create a national multicultural identity.

- 8 members, including the chairperson, of the Council for Multicultural Australia (CMA), which is made up of over 20 prominent citizens involved in multicultural issues. This workshop is a significant event, as these 8 council members are sitting down with the AFMs for the first time.

- 6 chairpersons of the State Multicultural Committees (SMCs).

- 6 staff members of the Council for Multicultural Australia Secretariat, within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, who administer the AFM program.

The main elements of the Australians for Multiculturalism (AFM) system are set out in Diagram 1.

### DIAGRAM 1: *THE AUSTRALIANS FOR MULTICULTURALISM (AFM) SYSTEM*
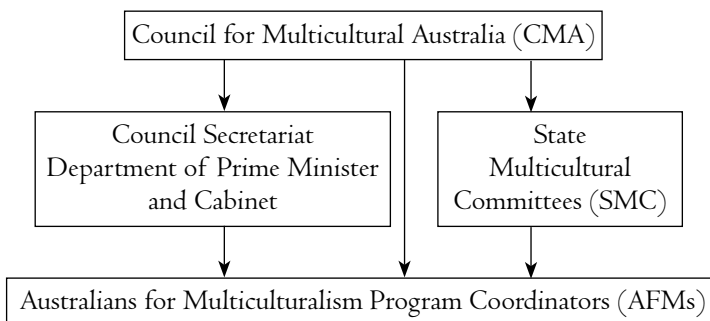
The purpose of the Australians for Multiculturalism workshops is to develop a stronger coordinated national focus for the last two years of work, before ultimately handing over the reins to the State Multicultural Committees (SMCs). The sociodrama takes place during the first session of one of these three day, quarterly workshops. This is the third such workshop that I have facilitated and the first time AFMs, council members and state chairpersons have met together as a whole group. The State Multicultural Committee Chairpersons will withdraw to a separate meeting after morning tea, while the Council for Multicultural Australia Members will attend a separate council meeting after lunch.

## The Warm Up

It is the first morning of the workshop. The room is large enough to have two working spaces. In one half of the room there are tables and chairs oriented to a projector screen, while in the other half there is an action space surrounded by a large circle of cane armchairs. The participants' warm up to the meeting is strong. Most AFMs have arrived the previous night and are pleased to see one another. Prior to the workshop, I have spent time clarifying the workshop purpose with the secretariat staffers and the AFMs, and have circulated their collected responses by email. My planning for this session has taken particular account of the participants' need to warm up to their purpose, to one another and to the meaning and value of their work as professionals in community outreach. After an opening statement and introductions, I invite the participants to reflect on their work to date.

'Lets imagine that over there is the end of this program in December next year' . . . *director points to the area of tables beyond the action space* . . . 'In the middle of the room it is the present, it's March this year' . . . *standing at the side of the action space near the tables* . . . 'From here look back at the other end of the room' . . . *points to the other end of the action space* . . . 'where you started on this work, whether it is ten or more years ago or even a few months ago. Go back to that point and walk the journey from where you started to the present. Walk slowly and by yourself, recalling what was achieved. Each person will have a different journey. Focus on what you are proud of in its own right, whether you achieved the outcomes according to schedule or not' . . . *participants slowly trace their journeys*. 'Form groups of three, mixing all the new people with the more experienced, and talk to each other about those things'.

Thoughtful discussions ensue. Four participants, including two council members, share their experiences with the whole group. I then move into action.

## Move to Action

'You will know that you could not have achieved what you have without one another. And that the nature of the task is overwhelmingly large with a lot of history and baggage. One of the dangers of this work is that we get so involved with our piece of the puzzle that we start losing sight of the whole jigsaw. This is as true of council

23

members as it is of the secretariat, as it is of the community outreach workers. Please take a seat in the circle.'

*The participants sit down. The director places a chair in the middle of the room.* [**Choice Point 1**]

Director    In order to work well together we need a common understanding of what the day to day reality of the AFM work is like. This chair represents your typical AFM coordinator. Around the chair we are going to set out the day to day pressures and challenges that they face.
                Who is one of the people putting pressure on you AFMs? . . . l*ong pause . . . looks at AFMs . . .*

AFM1      Well, one of the local multicultural groups.

Director    What do they say to you?

AFM1      Oh . . . We need more support.

Director    OK, bring out a chair and place yourself as close to or as far away from this chair as captures the strength of the pressure they place on you. Does that feel right? Are you on the phone? . . . OK pick up the phone and fire away . . . Make it as direct and strong as it is.

AFM1 *(as local multicultural group spokesperson) . . . warming up to role . . .* We're having trouble with the local council. You sent us some of that material from the local government association but the Mayor doesn't care. Can't you get the President or Minister to ring him? It's not going to work without him . . . We need to appoint a council-paid migrant community worker. We need more resources here . . .

Director [**Choice Point 2**] Thank you . . . You stay there. Now . . . *addressing the rest of the group* . . . who is another person putting pressure on AFMs?

AFM2      My state committee chairperson (*who is actually present in the room*). He's been speaking to the press out of turn and I've copped it from the department to keep him in line and we're on the phone. He's yelling at me for not keeping him informed.

Director    OK come out here and place yourself in relation to the . . .

SMC1      *leaps up and takes up the role* . . . What the hell is going on here? You're supposed to help me manage these bastards. We can't just be controlled by the bureaucrats in Canberra. It's important that we have something to say to the press . . . *group laughter . . .*

Director    Is that how it is?

AFM2      Absolutely

SMC1      Yep. I bore it up her . . .

Director [**Choice Point 3**] So that's a big pressure . . . You stay there . . . *to AFM2.* What else is there? . . . *to group*

AFM3      Well, there's the death threats.

Director    Is this by phone? . . . OK, phone message . . . You be the caller leaving the message and place yourself as close to the centre here as you experience the

pressure this message puts on you.

AFM3 *(as threatening phone-caller) menacingly* . . . Listen here you bitch, if you keep on what you're doing I'm gonna get you. I know where you live. You got a nice dog . . . pity if something happens to him. Then you'll be next.

Director [**Choice Point 4**] You choose someone to make the threat and sit in this chair *(at the centre)* . . . *selects auxiliary* . . . Now, let's have a couple more people to represent the AFMs here in the middle. . . . *two other AFMs sit in middle* . . . What happens to you when you hear this? Show us with your body as you listen. You other two follow her lead. . . . OK phone-caller, you begin. . . . *auxiliary takes up role.*

AFM3 *slumps, hands over face* . . . Oh shit . . . I feel sick. I can't move . . . *others mirror her*

Director How long do you stay like that?

AFM3 About 5 minutes, then I call someone else. I'm buggered if I let it stop me doing what I believe in . . . but it takes weeks to get over it . . . I'm still shaky . . .

Director So that's a big ongoing pressure . . . In a minute we'll have all these pressures re-enacted. First we'll keep setting out all the significant pressures. What else is there?

AFM4 Well, the Department is always wanting reports on what we're doing. I'm too busy working in the community to give them the details they want.

Director You get up now and place yourself. Is this on the phone again? . . . Yes.

AFM4 *(as Department)* You haven't submitted the report on your work with local groups. It's 3 weeks overdue. Council meeting is next week. We can't report on progress unless we get it from you. What's going on? When will you have it done? Will you hold to it? This is serious. It is part of your contract. We can't keep going like this.

Director OK hold your position there . . . *to whole group* . . . Now we're getting a picture of the day to day pressures on working in the community. [**Choice Point 5**] Let's hear from each of the pressures in order and then you AFMs in the middle speak out what effect it has on you? *Auxiliaries enact the demands in sequence.*

Typical AFMs in Centre Hang on, we're doing the best we can . . .

What do you want — blood?

That's not my job. You have to follow the guidelines here. I've already told you that. . . . *slams down phone* . . . I've had it with him.

We can't be all things to all people . . .

They just don't realize what we have to put up with . . .

I'm glad I'm not doing this job on my own . . .

Director [**Choice Point 6**] This is a snapshot of what it is like to be an AFM. Let's have everyone return to their seats. Thank you. Turn to the person next to you and have a conversation about what you are aware of now, that you weren't aware of before this enactment . . . *after 2 minutes* . . . Lets hear a few comments.

Participants Hadn't realized what it was like.

Sorry to hear about those people threatening you.

That's terrible. Are you OK?

Gee there's a lot there.

It's very stressful. Don't know how you manage.

Director Thank you. The next step is that, with a better understanding of the reality of day to day life of the community outreach, we move into the key activity of looking at what you want and what you actually get from each other in this wider team. First we'll have morning tea for 20 minutes. And thank you very much to the SMC chairpersons for being part of our work here this morning. We will all be in touch with you.

## After morning tea the group reassembles in the action space.

Director [**Choice Point 7**] You are the three most significant groups that influence how the council achieves its goals *(AFMs, council members, secretariat)*. How well you work together and the kinds of messages that are sent and received about what you each want are easily distorted. So in order to improve effective working relationships, we're going to focus on what you three groups give, get and want from each other. Please get together into three groups with your colleagues as council members, secretariat staff and AFM coordinators. Make a list for each of the other two groups under the headings 'What We Give', 'What We Get' and 'What We Want'. You have 30 minutes.

*The three groups assemble in separate corners of the room and work willingly on this task. The council and the AFM group present to each other first. No discussion is permitted until both groups have presented all three lists. Many items on the lists are reasonably predictable and participants use the opportunity to bring out aspects of the tension in their formal council-AFM relationships. As director, I make minimal interventions. The AFMs' list of 'What We Get' includes these two items of significance — some council members ringing us continually on trivial matters; some council members expecting us to act as their personal staff, asking us to do non-essential and non-strategic community work. The following exchange then occurs.*

AFM5 We spent time writing reports for the secretariat which you haven't read and you want us to inform you all over again.

CMA Member There's too much detail. I just need to know what's important. Besides, it's important that we keep in touch with you.

AFM5 Yes, but it's as if you think we don't have anything else to do.

CMA Member But if I don't stay in touch with you then I don't get ideas about what to do . . . and . . . I won't know what to think. [Choice Point 8]

AFMs (*almost as a group*) Ahh . . . *long pause* . . . Thank you . . . *pause* . . .

*At this point a tangible group insight occurs. Group members recognise that many council members really*

*need the community coordinators to help them lead, rather than just to follow council members' directions. This is a significant shift in role relationships.*

*Each group completes the task, summarises items to work on and begins to make preliminary agreements that will render their work easier. The session subsequently closes and council members' participation in the AFM workshop ends. After a joint lunch, council members convene their separate meeting. Subsequent workshop evaluations show that AFM coordinators highly valued this session with the council members.*

## Discussion of Choice Points

### *Choice Point 1: The director places a chair in the middle of the room*

A lot of development has occurred prior to this moment. I have been working towards this phase from the beginning of the workshop. I am conscious of many things — the feeling in the group, the group's purposefulness, the level of interest and, in myself, the simple pleasure of creating an intrigue about what will happen next. I am holding two questions that I have already begun to answer.
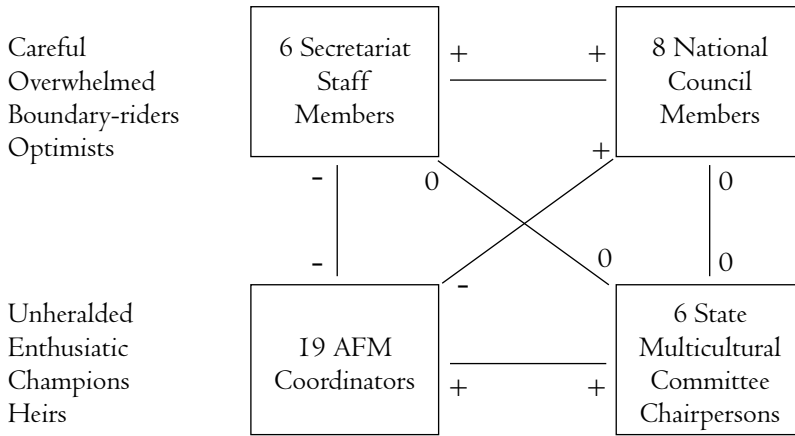
- What is the purpose of the sociodrama?

- How will I manage the warm up so that the sociodrama is successful?

As facilitator, I am very clear about the purpose of the workshop. I know that the sociodrama will only be productive if it addresses this purpose. I had surveyed all AFM coordinators beforehand about outstanding issues, and discussed the brief with the senior program manager at the secretariat. The aim of the workshop is to develop a stronger coordinated national focus for the last two years of work, in particular to work out the best way to put into action the council's decision regarding the community consultation strategy. In order to fulfil this aim, I will need to take into account the relationships and subgroups involved. I have been thinking about two related questions.

- Are the relationships between the subgroups adequate to the task?

- To develop more effective relationships, what roles are needed?

Through my previous work with these groups and discussions held in the lead up to this workshop, I have made an analysis of the major subgroups and their relationships, shown in Diagram 2.

## Diagram 2: Subgroups in the Australians for Multiculturalism (AFM) System

Careful
Overwhelmed
Boundary-riders
Optimists

Unheralded
Enthusiatic
Champions
Heirs

```
┌──────────────┐   +        +   ┌──────────────┐
│ 6 Secretariat│                │  8 National  │
│     Staff    │────────────────│   Council    │
│   Members    │             +  │   Members    │
└──────────────┘                └──────────────┘
   -       0                          0
                  ╳
   -              0                   0
┌──────────────┐   -            ┌──────────────┐
│              │                │   6 State    │
│   19 AFM     │                │ Multicultural│
│ Coordinators │                │  Committee   │
│              │   +        +   │ Chairpersons │
└──────────────┘                └──────────────┘
```

In real life, the AFM coordinators have more complex relationships with the secretariat and council members than simply 'positive, negative or neutral'. Their work is difficult and highly political. While they are highly committed to the goals of the program and deeply respect most council members as individuals, AFMs have a cynical view of the secretariat as bureaucratic and of the council as an ineffective champion of the cause. Secretariat staff tend to view their role as one of keeping AFMs in line. Because the secretariat and AFMs essentially carry the hopes of the council in achieving its objectives, council members are positive to both groups. The position of state chairperson is a relatively new aspect of the system that has largely been established through the efforts of their local AFMs.

To answer the question posed earlier, I do not think that the relationships between the subgroups are adequate to the task. At the very least they could be improved. The AFMs feel largely overlooked in terms of what is expected of them, and the reality of the day-to-day pressures of their work. Caught up in the daunting task of changing community attitudes, council members and secretariat staffers have tended to take them for granted. My assessment is that AFM coordinators do not feel their work sufficiently valued, particularly by council members. However, this is not easily discussed in public because of the respectful nature of their relationships with council members. I know that conflict is likely to be minimized because community outreach workers are highly skilled in diplomacy and negotiation. After all, internal conflict usually means the death of any community outreach program.

My instinct is that the main role cluster under-expressed by council members is that of clearly valuing the contributions of others. AFM co-ordinators want council members to understand the personal costs that the work really involves and they want

to see what value council members actually put on them. I hold my focus on the AFM and council members as the key relationship needing to be developed. Relations with secretariat staffers are sometimes an issue, but both they and AFMs do meet regularly at these workshops. It is council members who have been the missing element. When I have worked this out I check my analysis in the group. It is now quite obvious. There is no more time to think it all through. It is time to trust my judgement.

An acceptable way of bringing out these major concerns in public is needed. The role of *straight talker* will emerge when there is sufficient structure to maintain professional distance, even while the concerns are also intensely personal. Therefore my group interventions must focus on social roles and subgroups, and as a consequence any enactment will be sociodramatic in nature. This is likely to build sufficient professional distance to allow people to be themselves in a group negotiation. The purpose of the sociodrama is thus for the participants to:

• Deepen their understanding of one another's worlds. I am particularly interested in the development within the group of the role of the *un-conflicted valuer of others' contributions*.

• Build their capacity to negotiate better working relations.

I had imagined a sociodrama with two scenes.

Scene 1    an enactment of the day to day pressures in the work life of an AFM coordinator. This would concretise the elements of the system that have an overall impact on AFMs. I imagined a group-centred sociodrama built around the life experience of group members.

Scene 2    a structured negotiation involving what group members give, get and want from other subgroups. For this I had foreseen participants working in subgroups to develop an awareness of the things that are important to them and how they relate to the other subgroups. The identity of those subgroups, and their relationships with other subgroups, would thus become refined. It would be real life, and the integration of any understandings from the experience would be channelled into group agreements or action plans that would improve working relationships.

As with any sociodrama, a parallel warm up in the participants' social and personal roles was required. This concept will be further expanded in subsequent sections.

After the earlier group activities, I see that participants have warmed up to the purpose, to themselves, to each other, to display and to myself as leader. The placing of a chair in an empty space is a natural flow on from this initial work. The visual stimulus of the chair and its symbolic meaning focuses the group members' attention. There is a sense of expectation that something relevant will occur, and that it will be drawn from

the group itself. All the dramatic skills of the director are present.

The chair anchors a tableau using distance, size and enactment to concretise the system of pressures experienced by the AFM coordinators. It is the totality of this system that I want to work with. I want council members and others to see the world through AFM eyes. The nature of government programs is such that the views of program administrators and council members usually take precedence over the frontline workers, so I see myself as redressing the balance. Once this occurs the possibility of a more effective working relationship can emerge.

## Choice Point 2: Local Multicultural Group Spokesperson . . . 'We're having trouble with the local council'

The reality of local group life fills the stage. Group members are warming up to display their situations. This is a group-centred sociodrama. No one person owns the story. The enactment of the role of the local multicultural group spokesperson demanding attention is well enacted, and elicits audience responses. They each imagine what it would be like to be on the receiving end, and are thus beginning to reverse roles with others in the system.

I choose not to role reverse at this point, because to do so would create a warm up to the individual role and role responses. Instead I continue to expand the system so that we become aware of the pressures on AFMs, rather than AFM responses to those pressures. A focus on individual responses will provoke solution-seeking to the relationship issue, as well as narrow the enactment to a single version of such relationships. Here, I am more focused on group relationships and in warming up the group to the reality of the work. This is more in line with developing the role of *clear valuer of an AFM*.

## Choice Point 3: State Committee Chairperson . . . 'I bore it up her'

Here the role relationship between an AFM coordinator and her State Multicultural Committee Chairperson erupts onto the stage. As the SMC chairperson speaks, the audience members are imagining the scene and the implied relationship behind the words. Group members appear relaxed and intrigued. They recognize the truth of this depiction. The SMC chairperson is clearly warmed up to the situation on two levels, his personal relationship with his AFM and his social role as a chairperson. He is also warmed up to displaying himself and has captured the role beautifully. He is delighting in shamelessly claiming his position as a harassing committee chairperson. It would be great to capitalize on the spontaneity of the moment. As director I have a number of choices here:

- Capture more of the conflict by inviting the AFM to come to the middle chair and respond to the chairperson

- Produce a role reversal by directing the AFM to take up the role of the SMC chairperson and have the SMC chairperson sit in the empty chair

- Bring out the other elements of the system in relationship to that SMC chairperson, such as the media and the bureaucrats in Canberra

- Move on to concretizing the next pressure experienced by AFMs

All of these interventions will be productive, depending on how they are linked by the director to the purpose of the enactment. Had this been a psychodrama, I would be particularly interested in the dynamic between this AFM and her SMC chairperson and worked to bring out more of the role relationship. The audience would certainly have enjoyed a depiction of such a conflict but I noticed myself hesitate. As a director, I have been trained to notice my inner cues and to use them to assist decision making in the moment. To produce this conflict would be somewhat sensationalist, even voyeuristic, and I cannot sense an immediate link to our purpose. This is a sociodrama where I am more interested in the range of elements that make up the system, in this case the different pressures experienced by AFMs in their working lives. It is my purpose that holds 'true north' for me. The action is proceeding well and participants are continuing to warm up. I decide to keep expanding the system.

### Choice Point 4: The Death Threat . . . 'Pity if something happens to him. Then you'll be next'

At this point I direct the AFM to demonstrate her response on hearing the death threat. This was instinctive and contrasts with my decision at the previous choice point. The matter-of-fact telling of this shocking event has created a wave of concern. This event is clearly important in the life of the group and I go with the flow. To go against would appear callous. There is no reason to deny my feeling for her. When directing a sociodrama, I am always in need of my responses and my connection to others. However, to reduce the isolation of the protagonist in re-experiencing the moment of the death threat, I direct two other participants to join her as typical AFMs at the centre of this system. This intervention removes the tendency to over-focus on a single person's story and generalizes the experience to the AFMs as a group. This is a group-centred sociodrama rather than a protagonist-centred sociodrama, even though for a moment we are enacting a vignette about a single person's story. In directing a sociodrama, I place more emphasis on the nature of sub-group identity and the role relationships between subgroups, than on individual role relationships.

The death threat is replayed and the protagonist slumps, hands over face — 'Oh shit . . . I feel sick. I can't move'. Her response to the threat is mirrored and amplified by the other auxiliaries playing the roles of AFMs. The group is transfixed. Group members have warmed up to both the personal and social aspects of the role — the personal nature of being vulnerable to a death threat and the social role of the change agent facing community resistance. Learning to stay aware of both the personal and social warm ups of participants has been an important aspect of my development as a sociodramatist.

Social and personal aspects of roles always co-exist. The way that a director names

a role in the moment of enactment reflects what she or he is paying attention to. To be effective, a sociodrama must involve a warm up to both the personal and the social. A warm up to social roles alone creates a tendency towards stereotyped and superficial enactments where performance rather than learning becomes the focus. A warm up to the personal alongside or within the social role builds the possibility for the experience to touch participants deeply. At this choice point in the sociodrama, I notice that the simultaneous warm up to the personal and the social has deepened considerably. This is critically important, because without a parallel warm up there is insufficient depth of feeling to build the awareness that will drive change.

In the next part of this sociodrama, I interview the AFM in her role as a person receiving a death threat. This AFM, who has temporarily become the protagonist for the group, is already strongly displaying the feeling aspect of her role. It is enough that she makes this visible. I have no contract to enter her inner world. My factual question, 'How long do you stay like that?' lifts the thinking component of the role and she reasserts her determination to act without fear. There is no sense of 'poor me' in the portrayal, nor does she avoid her feelings. I sense that she merely wants to show how, as an AFM, she lives with threat as an ordinary everyday experience. In a psychodrama, I would probably have directed her to reverse roles with the person who was threatening her, but here our purpose is the exploration of a system and I decide to continue expanding that system.

## Choice Point 5: 'Let's hear from each of the pressures in order'

The auxiliaries who are enacting a range of pressures are now on stage. The group members' responses are intense. I could have kept expanding the system, but I am curious to explore how the auxiliaries, as a group of typical AFMs, will react to these pressures. Rather than explore the nature of each pressure and the specific set of role relationships involved, I am interested in the totality of the system. By hearing from each pressure in order I am encouraging participants to warm up to the role of *systems thinker*, to view an expanded picture of the reality of AFM work. It is my belief that provoking systems thinking is important, because participants are often preoccupied in their own small corner of an organization and fail to notice the overall system. When we see the whole picture we are able to identify and analyze patterns of relating, to think about different aspects of the system, even to role reverse with others. This will assists the participants to create progressive negotiations.

## Choice Point 6: 'This is a snapshot of what it is like as an AFM'

There has been a warm up and an enactment. Now I need to intervene to either expand the system and explore the subgroup relationships further, or organize sharing. I decide to end the sociodrama here. On reflection, I realize that I am influenced by a range of factors. The drama is very contained at this point. I am somewhat anxious about unleashing, and then having to manage, the complexity of the system. It is almost time for morning tea and the SMC chairpersons must soon leave. I have achieved my immediate goal which was to warm the group up to role reversal with the AFMs, so that all participants can build

better inter-group relationships. I facilitate sharing, and then frame the next session so that participants can appreciate the link to the next piece of work.

## Choice Point 7: 'You are the three most significant groups'

I think of this as an extended integration phase of the sociodrama, a role test for subgroup relationships. The participants have been relating to one another as individuals during morning tea. I now intervene to build awareness of subgroup identity, to warm group members up to the role relationships between subgroups and to the whole system. I give each subgroup a task that involves them in defining their common identity in relationship to the other two subgroups. The role of *systems thinker*, developed in the previous session, is thus utilized and expanded.

This session provides an opportunity for the council members and the AFM coordinators to clarify what they give, get or want from one another. By contrast, secretariat staff members have been developing this aspect throughout the life of the program, even though most communication has been on an individual and state-by-state basis. The session is highly significant, because it is the first time that an overview of all subgroup relationships has been on display.

As a result of the sociodrama, participants are developing a deepening understanding of the daily pressures exerted on AFMs. There is now a real possibility for progress in improving the working relationships between CMA members and AFM coordinators, and enhancing the links between AFMs and the secretariat. Subgroup negotiation is real and substantial work. With a positive warm up in participants, these negotiations will help to develop constructive working relationships between the subgroups. I thus spend time emphasizing the importance of this before directing participants to the task.

## Choice Point 8: 'I won't know what to think'

The negotiations are relatively detailed and this one exchange stands out as highly significant. This was the culmination of the mornings work. The council member says 'and . . . I won't know what to think'. There is honesty in his expression. In this moment, the AFMs have an experience of the council members valuing them. They appreciate the council members developing the new role of *clear valuer of AFM contributions*. They feel acknowledged for their work. They experience their complementary role of *insightful guide for council leadership*. The pragmatic and constructive mood of the negotiations continues.

The substantial purpose of the sociodrama is achieved and I feel complete. The key roles that will assist in the improvement of subgroup relationships, *clear valuer of AFM contributions* and *insightful guide for council leadership*, have emerged. All that remains is to complete the other discussions between subgroups and to record the agreements.

## Conclusion

Sociodrama, like other Morenian methods, follows a sequence of warm up, enactment,

analysis, and integration or sharing. I am influenced in how I direct a sociodrama by two important concepts. Firstly I see the director's role as defining and holding the purpose of the sociodrama, with the warm up and enactment clearly aligned with the purpose. Secondly, the director carries a working analysis of the subgroups and their role relationships. There were many choice points during this sociodrama at which I might have directed more psychodramatically but did not. The group would probably have gone along with it, but it was not aligned with what I thought of as our purpose together. On reflection I realize that it would have been possible to involve the participants in an initial assessment of their role relationships, rather than simply doing it myself. However, this would almost certainly have taken longer than the time available. Group members did eventually take part in an analysis of subgroup relationships, and did act on that analysis in the 'here and now' when negotiating in subgroups their 'give, get and want' from one another.

The integration phase of this sociodrama occurred in the negotiated agreements that were made publicly between subgroups as a result of shared perceptions. The implications for each subgroup's future actions are held in those agreements. Likewise, participants' new learning is held in the ongoing relationships between the individuals and subgroups. I have found that it helps if the integration is very pragmatic. Each person in the group draws different learning from the experience and will apply it in different ways.

At the end of the morning I decided not to proceed with group sharing about the process of the workshop or to identify participants' new awareness, even though I knew that it might reinforce the gains made. I thought that the group members had poured a great deal of effort into their negotiations, and it was enough to let the agreements stand.

# Seeing Double

*Moving Between a Psychodramatic and*
*a Sociodramatic Perspective*

## Peter Howie

*Abstract*

In the debate about the differences and different uses of psychodrama and sociodrama, the most useful conclusion is to 'see double'. In any group or drama, both a psychodramatic and a sociodramatic perspective can be useful. The paper posits that, in the final analysis, psychodrama is a focused and specialised form of sociodrama because everything that takes place in a psychodrama is connected to the group, and through the group to the socius. Examples from practice are included to illustrate the premise.

*Key Words*

Moreno, sociodrama, psychodrama, sociodramatist, psychodramatist, protagonist, enactment, group, group work, spontaneity

## Introduction

Along with other practitioners, I have come to regard as unnecessary many of the assumptions and cultural conserves surrounding the questions, 'What is sociodrama?' and 'What is psychodrama?' This paper considers the subject in a different light, by asking what I think are the more useful questions, 'What are the psychodramatic aspects?' and 'What are the sociodramatic aspects?'

## The Urge to Settle

Psychodramatists, sociodramatists, sociometrists and role trainers are trained to keep an open mind, an open imagination and an open spirit towards a protagonist's and a group's presentation. Indeed this is one of the training's great outcomes. The purpose

is to discourage the producer-director from settling on a single, rigid explanation or solution regarding a protagonist's enactment. I discovered in my early training as a scientist, a computer programmer, a house painter, a Herbal-life retailer and a property developer that I wanted to rapidly settle on a solution. I wanted things sorted. I felt better when I knew 'what's what' and could tell the protagonist authoritatively 'what's what!' My automatic mental processes, the conscious and especially the unconscious, non-conscious and pre-conscious, propelled me towards a settlement in quick time. It was ironic to realise that, in terms of adequacy, my rapid movement towards resolution was probably acceptable to most people. Better to get it sorted, any old solution being better than none, case closed, rather than tolerate ambiguity and approximation, and remain open to possibility and its attendant anxieties.

Psychodrama training is designed to counter this tendency towards a quick and final settlement, in many and varied ways. Trainees train and work with a wide variety of people. They are supervised in situ and while working. They practice with peers, supervise peers and others, and reflect on, process and document sessions. They learn how to work with the protagonist's warm up and the group's warm up. They read, observe, listen, investigate and try things out. Most importantly, they try things out, they experiment. This is entirely a part of the Morenian spirit of the fully engaged participant scientist who remains open to what s/he sees, hears, feels, tastes and touches.

## Seeing Double

The director of a psychodrama looks, with a psychodramatist's eye, at a protagonist and begins to imagine the pictures that they are forming of their life and experience. The images may include a view of self, together with some of the more localised and family forces that have impacted on their life and the development of that self. From this vantage point, a director may then produce some or all of these pictures, following the protagonist's warm up from one scene to another.

The director of a sociodrama, with a sociodramatist's eye, looks at a protagonist and begins to imagine the pictures that they are forming of their life and experience, as well as the larger cultural forces that formed and informed that experience. The images may include a view of self, together with some of the more communal and cultural forces that have impacted on their life and the development of that self. From this vantage point, a director will then produce scenes containing some or all of these larger forces and follow the protagonist's warm up from one scene to another.

## The Practical Applications of Seeing Double

There is great value in applying a sociodramatist's eye to the direction of a psychodrama. There is great value in applying a psychodramatist's eye to the direction of a sociodrama. It is important to be able to move easily between these two vantage points. In the following section, I discuss four applications and examples where a flexible switching of focus has been of great benefit to the protagonist, the group or the director.

## Reflecting on a Session

The real value in post hoc reflection is to develop new responses, new thinking, new appreciation and new understandings about the work that has concluded. These new responses are of value to the director, both for their own learning and for their consideration of future work with the protagonist.

At the end of a psychodrama session, there is often a subtle tendency to reflect upon it from the perspectives that were generated during the session. This is where a sociodramatic eye can be of great benefit. From a sociodramatic perspective, we can picture the larger socius and culture within which the protagonist lives or lived. We can imagine the impact of those cultural conserves and norms on the social atoms and roles produced or implicit in the drama. Any character, object or representation in a drama can have a sociodramatic element. For instance, the protagonist may have enacted the role of a childhood teacher. A teacher has both individual qualities, and 'teacher' qualities that are more culturally oriented. This type of reflection is crucial for ongoing work with individuals and for improving practice.

Looked at the other way around, I recall the value of viewing sociodramatic work through a psychodramatic lens. I recall group participants strongly responding to a protagonist in one particular sociodrama, in ways that promoted significant social atom repair and opened the protagonist to new ways of operating and living. This got me thinking 'What! A sociodrama providing psychodramatic healing elements. Has this always been so in sociodrama? How has this assisted this particular person and am I awake to the potentials and results?'

## Working with a Protagonist

I am directing an open psychodrama session with a group of largely naïve participants. They have come along of their own volition in response to invitations. We are about thirty minutes into the session. The group is forming slowly and the participants are cooperative. A protagonist, Tracy, steps forward partly because she was challenged to do so by a colleague in an earlier group warm up. Although Tracy has an intensely personal area of concern, I doubt that at this point she carries the central concern of the group. Tracy presents as a gangly, naïve young hippy full of positivity. She wants to explore the times 'when I zone out and get caught up with my own ideas and responses while listening to people'. At this point I consider a number of questions. Will this protagonist carry the concern for the group? Will she be able to present her concern in a contained manner? Will the group be able to stay involved with her? Can I make her concern relevant for the group? How might I do this? From a psychodramatist's perspective, I am aware of the necessity for the protagonist's concern to be of relevance to the group. From a sociodramatist's viewpoint, I am aware that the presenting concern is both supported and challenged by different cultures and values in our larger socius. I then produce three sociodramatic scenes. A range of sub-groups with different value systems regarding self awareness, self presentation and self containment form and interact. I follow this with a psychodramatic scene that involves Tracy as the protagonist. As Tracy enacts her personal story, there is

considerable connection with the group theme. In the sharing, these connections are explicitly expressed by many group members.

## Planning for Group Work

Thinking from a psychodramatic perspective and a sociodramatic perspective provides me with a rich picture of any group that I am planning for. For example, I was considering plans for a group whose purpose was to learn the psychodramatic approach in work with children. Twenty adults and one young teenager had enrolled, but unfortunately the presenter was unable to attend and I was asked to stand in. Firstly, I considered the group using my sociodramatist's eyes. I thought about the kinds of participants, mostly working in education, who would use the psychodrama approach with children. I reflected about the social systems that they would come from. Utilising my psychodramatist's lens, I thought through the participants' potential experiences and memories of childhood school days. I produced a sociodrama of the schoolyard. I invited the group members to form the sub groups that operate in a school yard — the quiet brainy group, the loud pushy group, the anti-school group, the dropping-out-of-school group, the don't-want-to-be-in-a-group group and others. Having thought through the group in advance using both perspectives, I was able to imagine and work easily with a range of issues that can affect children. I was able to provide a way for participants to make contact with, and consider, some of the important issues of childhood.

## Mobilising Spontaneity

There have been moments when I have found myself immobilised while producing a psychodramatic scene and my spontaneity has failed me. At these times, I have found it beneficial to imagine the sociodramatic elements of the scene. This perspective has immediately provided me with a larger systems view. In a parallel process, I have then been able to warm up the protagonist to the production of a wider range of elements in the system. My imagination expands in these moments, I become aware of a limitless range of possibilities, and my spontaneity increases tenfold.

# Seeing Double Rules OK

I recommend that practicing psychodramatists use their sociodramatic eyes regularly, and practicing sociodramatists use their psychodramatic eyes in a similar way. Obviously, discrimination and flexibility are called for. A psychodramatist might use a sociodramatic perspective during a group warm up, when settling on a protagonist and during sharing. Perhaps a sociodramatist might use a psychodramatic viewpoint to choose a workable theme from a range of options, to decide whether the enactment will be group centred or protagonist centred, and to determine the depth of exploration.

In the final analysis, psychodrama is a focused and specialised form of sociodrama. I say this because everything that takes place in a psychodrama is connected to the group, the socius, and nothing exists outside or absolutely independent of the many meta-

groups, groups and sub groups that make up our lives. What takes place is connected through these groups to our wider culture, socius again, which is the ocean in which we all swim.

## LYNETTE CLAYTON RESPONDS . . .

Peter Howie's article is thoughtful and reflective. It warms people up to an open mind, to spontaneity and flexibility in their role as psychodramatist and sociodramatist. I note that he is primarily considering protagonist centred dramas in the first two pages and appears to be addressing those who work primarily with protagonist centred dramas. Was this his primary audience?

In the section titled 'Working with a Protagonist' he begins with three sociodramatic sub-groups and moves to the psychodrama with the young girl. It was a very useful technique in the situation. In the section 'Planning for Group Work', Peter planned a sociodrama using the principles laid down for sociodramatists — consider the purpose of the group, reverse roles with group members, set out the system, allow sub-groups to interact, reverse roles amongst sub-groups. It was a useful way to proceed with a group that he had a one-off presentation with, and much safer than a protagonist centred drama.

I like Peter's sharing about the thinking he uses to stimulate his spontaneity and remain open minded in the role of director. Perhaps he needs to make this purpose more specific when he specifies his audience and purpose for writing. I think his final statement that 'in the final analysis, psychodrama is a focussed and specialised form of sociodrama' is Morenian, but needs to be put into context.

Moreno diverged from psychoanalysis and other theories of mind on three points. The baby is active and spontaneous from birth. The social and cultural context is important in the formation of the inner world. Open minded encounter between social and cultural groups makes for a healthy society. A core spiritual aspect which he called creative genius organises the inner system and the beliefs about self and others. It can be explored through axiodrama. The 'I' and the other 'I's' are one in the encounter.

Psychoanalysis has changed radically since Freud's structural view of the mind. Attachment theory based on Bowlby (late 1940s) emphasises the relationships from birth and acknowledges the baby's spontaneous part in them. Sullivan and Horney (1940s) brought in the cultural context. A developmental model was developed by Anna Freud, Erikson and others.

The major issue is the core where there is still exploration. Some call it the self, as in Self Psychology. Some describe creativity and the need for the silent space for creativity to emerge (Symington-flavour of the month). Some deny its existence. Some take a Buddhist view. Many are blinkered by religious ideas that they believe are real and concrete, thus making beliefs into facts.

What I like about Peter's paper is that it encourages the action of the creative genius by shifting frameworks. His spontaneity and flexibility encourage 'the encounter, the moment'. This is only my view. Others may critique differently and I would be interested

to see how Max Clayton, Brigid Hirschfield, Diana Jones, Warren Parry, Ross Colliver might write about it. That would also expand the socius.

*Best Wishes and Kind Regards,*
*Lynette Clayton.*

# Towards Healing

*Confronting the Holocaust through Psychodrama, Sociodrama and Rituals*

*Yaacov Naor and Hilde Goett*

## Abstract

In 'Towards Healing: Confronting the Holocaust through Psychodrama, Sociodrama and Rituals', Yaacov Naor and Hilde Goett describe an on-going workshop project undertaken with second and third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors and perpetrators. They discuss the trans-generational transmission of trauma, and identify differences and commonalities between victim and perpetrator descendants as well as those from mixed backgrounds. They describe how they use psychodrama, sociodrama and ritual to bring about encounter, dialogue and the beginnings of healing.

## Introduction

Since 1995 Yaacov Naor and Hilde Goett, the authors of this article, have been jointly engaged in a special psychodramatic workshop project, 'Confronting the Holocaust through Psychodrama, Sociodrama and Rituals' designed for second and third generation descendants of Holocaust victims and perpetrators. Our purpose is to assist participants to recognise and understand the moral, social and personal implications of the Holocaust.

The fact that as psychodrama directors we come from opposite sides of the Holocaust is unique and special. We bring with us the story and the legacy of our families. Yaacov Naor is the son of two Holocaust survivors. He was born in 1948 in a displaced persons camp in South Germany and moved with his parents to Israel as a one year old. Hilde Goett was born in Romania in 1953, her family part of the German minority in that country. She grew up in turmoil. On the one hand both her grandparents served in the Nazi army and she was discriminated against as the child of fascists. On the other hand, her grandmother was deported to Siberia by the communist regime. When she was in her twenties she moved with her family to Germany.

We began to co-lead psychodrama groups and realised that we shared the same goals and drives. We both wanted to teach people to listen to the Holocaust story, to make room for difference, to respect the other. While working together we became close. Our families met and slowly we became good friends. This was possible because we agreed that our purpose was not to reach reconciliation, but rather to teach the Germans and the Jews and others who attended the workshops to be witnesses to the unique personal expressions of participants and to create a dialogue with one another.

## The Trans-Generational Transmission of Trauma

Professional interest in the concept of trans-generational trauma, the passing on of traumatic consequences from generation to generation, has been increasing over the last 20 years and is now well established. This is because case studies, psychotherapy reports and researchers have found that second generation Holocaust survivors report the same kind of emotional problems and a similar depth of suffering as the Holocaust survivors themselves. As early as 1994 Jürgen Müller-Hohagen, who has carried out psychotherapeutic work for many years, published his understandings about the way trauma is passed on. The diagnostic criteria of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) resulting from war trauma are frequently fulfilled, although the person has no personal experience of war. But the deep feelings of shame and guilt hinder a constructive discussion on the trans-generational transmission of perpetrator trauma. As far as we know there has never been an investigation in Germany. Identification with power, obscuration and the re-defining of perpetrators as victims are some of the characteristics that are passed on in the perpetrator families. If we want to stop the inheritance of trauma from generation to generation we must find an accessible and adequate way of dealing with and processing Holocaust trauma.

Gabriele Rosenthal (1998) has investigated the trans-generational transmission of trauma of both survivors and perpetrators from the Nazi period. Her findings have had a strong influence on our work. She asks questions about the formation of dialogue in families from both sides, about the influence of the past on the present. Rosenthal demonstrates how the general lifestyle of the family, the everyday expectations of family members, the feelings of safety, acceptance and belonging, stem from the family's experiences of the Holocaust. She compares the problems of descendants of victims and perpetrators, and identifies commonalities and differences.

One of the commonalities these conflict groups share is silence, but the motivations are different. In the perpetrator families it is mainly the fear of pursuit, condemnation, persecution and prosecution that leads to silence about the Holocaust. In the survivor families it is sadness felt for murdered family members, the shame of such extreme humiliation and the desire to protect descendants from the shadow of these terrible events. Another commonality shared by the respective sides is the terrible effect of family secrets, which in the institutionalised family systems works against a thematic consideration of the past. This is mirrored in the fantasies of descendants, who express it in many different forms. Descendants of the victims pose questions about the guilt of survival such as "What did the survivors do in order to survive?" Meanwhile descendants of the perpetrators ask questions that imply guilt such as "What would I have done in the same situation?"

## The Workshop Settings

We offer the workshop 'Confronting the Holocaust through Psychodrama, Sociodrama and Rituals' in two different settings. The first one encompasses a series of weekend seminars in a cycle of two to three years. These include visits to the memorials at Auschwitz and Birkenau and psychodrama in the Educational-Encounter Centre in Oswiecim. In Birkenau we conduct rituals created by the group participants. These settings offer time and space for discussion and analysis, and are suitable for small groups of 15 to 25 participants. We also offer three hour workshops at conferences and conventions to provide an example of our work, where 30 to 80 participants are able to confront and discuss the consequences of the Holocaust in the present time. At these we usually work with psychodramatists and professionals who are familiar with role theory and psychodramatic techniques. Participants have ranged in age from 22 to 78 years.

## The Participants: Survivors and Perpetrators

Jewish participants who come to our workshops have some idea about the fate of their family members during the Second World War. They have concrete knowledge of what happened or retain fragments which trouble them. They mourn murdered family members and the loss of an intact family and social network, and feel outrage towards the perpetrators who have burdened them with this endless sorrow. They want to come to some comprehension of the sorrow, despair and mourning which seems to have no end. Participants from families of perpetrators express different feelings. They often wish to deny their family history and fight the feelings of guilt and shame, and have difficulty distinguishing between personal and collective guilt. They seek a better understanding of themselves and their families and want to break loose from their identification as perpetrators. Many grew up with the constant fear of retribution and want to address this. They also seek help to come to terms with the affection they feel for their perpetrator father or mother. Some also hope for atonement or even for

pardon. Other participants come from mixed families because they share the experiences of both victims and persecutors, for example baptised Christians from a partly Jewish background and people from families who have experienced persecution for political, religious or sexual orientation reasons. These participants are often anguished about their identity and affiliation.

As well as differences, workshop participants share common ground and these commonalities are investigated in our seminars without being generalised as equal or identical experiences. The Holocaust silence weighs heavily. All feel the need to decipher it, and all feel deeply involved as individuals, as family members and with respect to the other side. As well, all the participants are seen as traitors by their families because they betray the taboo of silence and seek open discussion and analysis. They confront the family with its troubled past and are therefore viewed as dangerous by other family members. They become the family scapegoats, regarded as the causes of disaster and accidents. Dina Wardi (1992), a psychoanalyst from Jerusalem, describes Jewish family scapegoats as 'commemoration candles' who create subjectivism about the Holocaust and sustain the mourning for those who perished. In the perpetrator and mixed families, those who confront their families with their Nazi past are also punished and excluded for breaking the silence code. They carry the fear, shame, guilt and blame for the sins of the family, the community and the world. Our groups are made up of scapegoats from all sides of the conflict, from victim, perpetrator and mixed families.

## The Work: From Encounter to Dialogue to Healing

Our work is based on Moreno's concept of the encounter that can lead to dialogue. Activities include psychodrama, sociodrama, ritual, art-making and activities that build awareness, trust, empathy and acceptance. Our concern is to initiate deeply meaningful personal discussions on the psychodrama stage, to find a language for this and to be aware of the different truths in order to overcome the consequences of collective trauma during the Nazi period. We start out with the premise that the experience of force or violence is innately experienced. The trauma sits tightly in the body where it has found its place and is physically felt. As psychodramatists and advocates of an action-oriented method, we know that a lasting effect occurs when the active discussion of a subject is deeply felt and penetrates the thought process, opening up new horizons and illuminating the problems. This means that during the work one's body must be attentively involved and self-determined.

### Warm Up

The body and encounter exercises that are part of our warm up begin to make this possible and also help establish real contact between the participants in the group. We utilise a wide range of small group exercises, with and without music, that are focused on the body and the senses. Some exercises are designed for participants to have fun together, to mirror one another and to build solidarity, while others see them combining forces to exclude others and break groups apart. The emotions and instincts of

participants from the context of their real lives are activated through this work, and participants from victim, persecutor and mixed families are able to encounter and experience one another. This helps create an atmosphere of attentiveness and openness for dealing with the sensitivity of the subject matter.

## Psychodrama and Sociodrama

As a rule, the trauma of the Nazi period has not been personally or directly experienced by participants in our workshops. They are not survivors of the Shoa or the Holocaust and are not Nazi perpetrators, but are their children, grandchildren and family members. We are dealing with trans-generational trauma. We allow the subjective truth of the respective sides to be represented on the psychodrama stage with all the sorrow, mourning, shame, despair, horror, rage and guilt that this entails. Thus a bridge is built connecting the participants with the family histories of the opposing sides.

Using sociodrama we explore the history of the Second World War, investigating the elements that caused such horrific violence, sorrow and destruction in Europe and that led to radical changes throughout the world. We consider the consequences for different sections of the populations who were partners in conflict. As we do this we aim to facilitate encounters between descendants of victims and perpetrators, and thus establish a dialogue for dealing with the burden of trauma stemming from the previous generations.

## Rituals

The Second World War and the Holocaust are a story of cruelty, pain and suffering which left scars on both the victim and the persecutor sides. The traces remain with us in the present and the process is long lasting. No matter how productive the workshops are in creating encounter, dialogue and healing, we know that words cannot fully and accurately express participants' reactions to the Holocaust. Phenomenological experience and expression are needed. Thus, while in Auschwitz we work psychodramatically on the stage, we also include a process of individual ritual creation at the Birkenau Death Camp.

One of the most difficult experiences of Holocaust survivors and their descendants has been the absence of a real concrete grave to mourn the dead. The rituals are an integral part of a psychodramatic or sociodramatic event because they provide symbolic concretisations. They create a new opportunity for burying the dead. They offer meaning and a sort of closure for the events of the past. They may take the form of religious services, memorial ceremonies, burial, poetry-reading and singing next to an imaginary grave. Some become theatre performances that include movement and singing. All are supported by the whole group, the community that is needed for holding and containing in such moments.

The ritual as a form of individual psychodramatic and sociodramatic sharing is a therapeutic act. It allows participants to confront the Holocaust in their own unique ways, without judgment or blame. It requires the use of imagination and creativity and gives voice, a stage, a form to emotions which have not been clearly expressed before.

45

Ritual creates a perspective, a liminal space, a surplus reality that exists simultaneously in the past and the present, bridging the space between a participant's inner and outer worlds. It leads to catharsis, change and a sense of integration. Some rituals have become for their creators the best and most profound way of confronting the Holocaust. Here are a few examples: walking barefoot on the rail tracks leading to the main crematorium, throwing glass bottles at the wall in the women's barracks while screaming and crying, listening to quiet harmonica music inside one of the barracks, reading Paul Celan's poem 'Death Fugue', sharing dry bread in a circle and eating it very slowly, participating in a dream-like ceremony of burial for a young woman.

These ritual ceremonies also allow sharing of the personal and the interpersonal simultaneously, and are thus therapeutic for the whole group. They focus on expressions of strong emotion such as anger, rage, guilt, fear, anxiety, shame, helplessness, hopelessness and humiliation, and are thus forms of acknowledgement of the suffering of the other side. A balancing between the individual and the group is created, a kind of psychosocial healing. The links between the individuals, the group and the community are strengthened.

## Towards Healing and Reconciliation

In these workshops participants investigate different ways that the roles of persecutor and victim are internalised within individuals and society. They explore spontaneous, expressive and creative ways of dealing with the relationship of aggressor and victim, and are encouraged to encounter 'the other side'. Active work through the body allows an immediate safe opening of the inner emotional world and an encounter with the truth which lies within. The participants share their memories, experiences, fantasies and feelings and give voice to their suffering. Opportunity is thus provided to win in the struggle against anonymity by breaking family and social habits of silence. Participants tell and act their stories and as a result learn to face their own Holocaust history in a genuine manner.

The psychodramatic, sociodramatic and ritual work assists the participants to move from projections, generalisations, prejudices, preconceptions and illusions to the process of learning. The participants learn to be centred, to take responsibility, to meet eye-to-eye, face-to-face with acknowledgement, empathy, respect and acceptance. These encounters between Holocaust second and third generation survivors and aggressors are often moving, frequently painful, sometimes impossible. These courageous people are taking the risk to meet and confront the other side in a safe way, working deeply on this theme in front of others in the group. Because the work facilitates intense experience for participants, we are aware of the danger of creating false closeness which can lead to premature forgiveness. We do not aim to reach reconciliation, but at times it happens spontaneously and naturally, in a step-by-step, long and slow process. Participants are brought together and united through this work and these rituals. They experience hope, a sense of belonging and relief from being alone, anonymous and overwhelmed by the enormity of the Holocaust.

# Reflections

Although the descendants of the Holocaust victims and perpetrators have an equal right to represent their sufferings on the psychodrama stage and to reflect on them in the context of real history, this does not mean that the sufferings of the two sides are looked at analogously. For us, it is much more important to find a way of expression that can be manifested in a common language that works diametrically against the traditionalised realities of that time.

As psychodrama directors from opposite sides of the Holocaust, we have looked back into our history and have succeeded in creating a safe place for painful expression, for trust-building, for a sense of belonging to develop. We want participants to accept the group from the opposite side, to exchange fear, hatred and prejudice for real encounter and genuine dialogue where the wounds can be felt, mourned and then healed. For us the extent of the destruction caused by Nazi power has become more complete and the loss of the Jewish people and their culture more perceptible. In the 15 years we have worked together we have developed a system of encounter and dialogue filled with mutual acceptance, respect, recognition and love. In the summers of 2008 and 2010 we carried out a new one week international psychodrama seminar in Krakow and Auschwitz for participants from many countries called 'Traces of the Holocaust in the Present'. Because of the success and meaningfulness of this experience, we plan to offer this format again in the future.

'Confronting the Holocaust through Psychodrama, Sociodrama and Rituals' is a painful and purifying experience for both sides of the Holocaust and frequently results in the decision to live an honourable and dignified future. We are all now responsible for ensuring that history does not repeat itself. An understanding of the pain that has become an essential part of a person's life can lead to a clear decision never to cause such hurt oneself and to realise a respectful and passionate relationship with other people.

*Yaacov Naor was the keynote speaker at the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) conference in Sydney in January 2010.*

*Further information regarding the work and workshops discussed in this article can be found on the Psychodrama Institute for Europe (PIfE) website at http://www.pife-europe.eu*

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# Healing Rifts: Sociodrama in a Maternity Community

*Don Reekie*

*Abstract*

Don Reekie was contracted by a New Zealand District Health Board to facilitate the healing of rifts among practitioners in a hospital maternity community. In this article he describes the efficacy of sociodrama in this work, particularly focusing on his decisions and interventions, and the responses of the participants involved. Reference is made to community members' written attestations regarding the positive ongoing consequences of the sociodramatic interventions. The author particularly acknowledges the community members and key players among them, as co-creators of a new maternity culture.

## Prologue

I present to you a courageous maternity community who set out to heal rifts between their member groups, hoping that sociodrama might provide the elusive answer to their problems. My commission with them lasted eighteen months and well before it was over they had begun to report publicly the difficulties they faced and their remarkable successes following one day of sociodrama. They presented at international conferences and wrote their story in journals, notably the British Medical Association's journal. They aspired to share with the broader community of health professionals the dramatic improvement in delivery of service, quality and safety that can be gained from improvements in relationships and communications.

## Settings

Competition and suspicion between midwives and doctors has a long global

history. Medical practitioners gained ascendancy in the Western world, with midwives widely regarded as the handmaidens of obstetrics. A unique twist was given to this situation in New Zealand by the 1990 Nurses Amendment Act, which authorised midwives to provide lead maternity care equal to medical practitioners. Mistrust on the part of many medical practitioners intensified when midwifery education no longer required a nursing qualification as a prerequisite. The 'new breed' of midwives was highly equipped for their task in the eyes of the midwifery profession, but did not conform to traditional hospital or medical culture. In the words of journalist Leah Haines (2009) "Health and Disability Commissioner Ron Paterson described the difference as obstetricians taking a 'risk-averse, interventionist approach' and midwives 'a less-interventionist approach, to allow the normal physiological process of labour to proceed'".

The tensions played out in maternity care contexts, often resulting in poor professional relationships and a search for remedies. A public report by the hospital with which I was involved, presented to delegates of an Australasian women's hospitals' conference, owned that "For a number of reasons . . . it was clear that relations between the various providers of care at their hospital were at an all time low . . . a group of 27 independent midwives wrote to the Managers of the Maternity Hospital expressing concerns and requesting a meeting. This was the first move towards positive communication and reconciliation. The response was, in public hospital terms, unconventional . . ." (Thomas & Stacey, 2002).

## Beginnings

It was a Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) midwife who suggested a sociodramatic intervention with the entire maternity community. The community's agreement told me the level of their desperation and courage. The clinical director was passionate about bringing compassion and good relations into hospital practice. He advocated openness, mutual respect and cooperative practice, although some of his colleagues regarded his vision with suspicion. The hospital general manager was collaborative and widely trusted as having her 'feet on the ground'. She and her staff valued the clinical director highly.

As an observer I sat in on a senior staff meeting that included LMC midwives, the District Health Board (DHB) head of obstetrics, DHB members and Maternity Consumers Council (MCC) representatives. All were committed to progressing collaboration although there was no specific mention of the planned sociodramatic intervention, nicknamed by then the Big Day Out. I met with the clinical director and hospital manager on a regular basis thereafter.

## Decisions

In order to assess and plan, I met with a number of small groups. The first, a representative microcosm of the organisation, urgently wanted improved services

and collaboration but could not see a common pathway forward. A group of midwives was keen to have a Big Day Out while a group of obstetricians was intent on stopping it, fearful that a facilitator without understanding of "surgical crises at 2am" would make matters worse.

Following are the areas I assess when making decisions about sociodramatic interventions and the conclusions that I came to in this case.

1. Discomfort, Vision and Hope (See Camson, 1995; Dannemiller, 1997; Dannemiller & Jacobs, 1992)
   *The maternity community was in severe discomfort. Each group held to its own visions.*

2. Strength of Relationships
   *The leaders were creative and courageous with mutually positive relationships with one another and each stakeholder group.*

3. Appropriate Authority
   *There was no doubt that the DHB had authorised and expected the professionals to produce effective collaborative practices.*

4. Proximity, Purpose, Identity and Values
   *Proximity between the groups was apparent but they had splintered into distinct identities. Values varied but each was predicated on the good of mother and child. The groups lacked a focus on a common purpose and needed to develop mutual trust.*

5. Legitimising by Marking: Outsiders to organisations, including facilitators, are aliens and need to be legitimised by a respected leader to be accepted[1].
   *I proposed that the hospital manager open the Big Day Out.*

6. Diagonal Slice Representative Microcosm: A diagonal slice group as a microcosm of a community provides a useful representation and can precipitate an expectation that percolates through the community.
   *My meeting with such a group revealed that there was a desperate longing for common purpose and identity.*

7. A Further Decision Centred on Attire
   *I wore suit and tie. I had heard speculation that I would be a 'touchy feely' character wearing crystal beads and kaftan.*

There was full acceptance that all groups in the maternity community including mothers, LMCs, pediatricians, DHB members and MCC members would be at the Big Day Out. Ahead of the day, I had invited each professional group to write a collective statement about their particular contribution to successful maternity, and their understanding of other groups' contributions. I believe this assisted the development of appreciation and amenability within and between the groups.

## Big Day Out
*In this section I will narrate the sociodrama in present dramatic tense as it unfolded, interweaving italicised asides to the reader throughout.*

The venue for the Big Day Out is in a conference centre away from the hospital. I set out an elongated oval of a hundred chairs in its large room. Over the next twenty minutes seventy participants arrive. We start promptly. I am acutely aware that everyone sees me as 'on trial' but even with their doubts they want the day to work. I am deeply conscious of this work's importance, the common valuing of mother and baby, and trust myself and the group. In consultative mode, the hospital's general manager sits beside me and introduces me. Her 'marking' me is crucial to my being accepted by some participants.

*I have previously applied sociometry, sociodrama and role training in large organisational groups and I am certainly not daunted.*

I begin. "Let's put out three chairs. This is a chair for a baby, this a chair for a woman, this a chair for a man. Now let us have a few minutes silence and recognise that what we are about today is the sacred moment of birth that centres on these three people." The silence is palpable. I let it continue. After a little over two minutes I say, "This is what this day is about, the success of this moment, the birth of a baby".

I continue. "Okay, we will clear these chairs to bring other chairs onto the floor. We are going to follow a woman through her pregnancy from the moment of conception to the moment of birth. What is it we know she is likely to ask? Who will she ask and what information will she be given? Let's start when she knows she has conceived." Participants put out chairs to represent the various people responding to the mother-to-be, the midwives, GPs, mothers of mothers, friends and obstetricians. Some participants sit on the chairs and represent the people they have named. Sometimes others volunteer to sit for those named. Others suggest alternative responses. By the close there are about forty-five peopled chairs.

*You may notice that I removed the chairs for mother, baby and father. I had considered maintaining an empty chair as a focus for a typical mother, but deemed it unnecessary as this drama is about the carers' responses and their differences. I know my beginning has made 'mother' vitally present. This large group was unfamiliar with role enactment and even a light exploration of typical though diverse responding was likely to evoke powerful experiences.*

Halfway through this process an LMC midwife suggests a question that an expectant mother might ask, and then provides a midwife's answer. An obstetrician intervenes to provide what he sees as the 'correct' answer. Their colleagues know these two have had a fierce conflict in the past over a mother's care. The group freezes. Anxious glances flit around the room. All eyes turn towards me. The room is electric.

I kneel beside the man, a little behind his shoulder. I ask, "Are you willing to have me coach you?" He shifts uncomfortably, says "Yes", adding "But what does that mean?"[2] I say, "You've listened to what she said and you've given your opinion. You've given your advice, making a suggestion. You have a different view of things".

He agrees. I go on. "How about you try this way. First you make quite sure you know what she has said. You need her to know that you want to discover whether you heard her correctly. So, tell her what you believe she said". He proceeds to do this. "Now ask her 'Have I heard you correctly?'" He does that. To his surprise she says, "No. That isn't what I said. It's certainly not what I meant".

I coach him further. "Now you say to her 'I mustn't have heard you correctly. Could you please tell me again?'" He does this. As she tells him what she has said the whole group breaths out and then in. I say to him, "See if you have got what she is intending to say. Find out by telling her what you've heard". He retells and she agrees he has "pretty well got it". I say to him, "But you have a different opinion to her. You think you understand what her view is, but yours is different". He agrees, "Yes, that's right". I say, "So now tell her that you have a different opinion to hers". He does. "Now go on from there and tell her how she might view it differently. Give her your reasons for taking a different view". After that I ask the midwife to repeat to him what he is proposing. He agrees she has heard him correctly. She states her position while acknowledging the usefulness of some of the points he brings forward.

The room is crackling with amazed excitement. Eyes acknowledge others across the room. Faces signal something is changing. He is not as far away from her as he had thought. The participants are beginning to believe change can happen.

For weeks afterwards they say to one another, "That was the moment!"

*When the group froze, I was alert and free. My mind focused on the relationship between two people and their community. The requirements of my professional association, The Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association, are strongly alive in me. "The producer trusts being with themselves moment by moment and has a sense of adequacy through experiencing their spontaneity and creativity. This is in contrast to feeling powerful as a result of the impact of their knowledge of techniques and theory on a . . . group" (ANZPA Board of Examiners, 2011:11).*

The group has focused intensely on a typical woman's pregnancy. The session concludes with enthusiasm high. They speak of seeing one another somewhat differently now. There is astonishment that they can discuss this area with strong commitment but without antagonism.

Tea break taken, I invite the participants to form small groups with others they identify with, discuss their communal goals and write them on large sheets of paper. Then in new mixed groupings I ask them to record ideas for achieving those goals. The statements viewed, participants gather to discuss the morning's achievements with a neighbour. I share my intention to explore typical scenarios in the life of their hospital throughout the afternoon. There is a buzz of interest.

In the afternoon I produce rolling sociodramatic enactments with role training elements. We set out typical scenes where tensions occur. Many are in the labour room in the middle of the night. One after another, staff members come forward

to review a scene. Each one receives acknowledgement. None is alone with their experience. Others become actors for the first-actor, often playing a member of their own profession and at times standing in unfamiliar shoes. They role reverse between the characters of the scene. Audience members make recognition and offer commentary. They suggest alternatives and step into scenes. Coaching, with mirroring and brain storming alternatives in action, open up new possibilities.

A midwife describes feeling demeaned when an obstetrician arrived at her request and "He took over". She sets the scene, which others enact with her. Mirrored in a re-enactment she witnesses herself standing aside subserviently when receiving the doctor, which results in an authority vacuum. Through role training she develops her professional autonomy. As an *efficient hostess* she can now summarise the situation, stating the specific assistance she seeks. Obstetricians, anaesthetists and midwives become her obstetrician and all are easily cooperative. Her authority meets his appropriately.

A scene where a doctor feels it necessary to be authoritative in guiding a mother provokes speculative alternatives from several doctors in the audience. Midwives and mothers spontaneously enact radically different approaches. The doctor experiments without shame, finding ways to communicate that are open and satisfying.

At the end of the Big Day Out the sharing and discussion is positive and optimistic. The participants commit to a regular maternity community forum. There are no other promises but many expressions of a willingness to experiment.

In the weeks that follow, the hospital manager and the clinical director hear many reports of success. The maternity community members are cooperating with good humour in challenging situations.


## Learning through Crises

As a result of the achievements of the Big Day Out, the maternity community forum was established. Built on goodwill and experimentation, it met monthly. My role was to coach the chairperson and group members, either by their or my initiative. When a community overcomes significant challenges, as this group had done, there is then further development. They learn to trust their efficacy, grow towards openness, realise individual capacities and strengthen interdependence. All these developments were furthered as the forum faced and overcame a series of crises in the following months.

### First Crisis: Representation of Mothers

The manager invited two mothers to the first forum meeting, known to her through successful resolution of complaints. After speaking of their birthing experiences, in one case with bitter comment regarding a midwife, they excused themselves and left early. The midwife was present and raised her concern at mothers attending professional consultations. Several agreed that lay people could

gain or contribute little to medical discussions. Others expressed discomfort at such restrictiveness. My view was that mothers should be forum members once they were representative of a wide range of birthing experiences. A mothers' forum was formed with help from the local Parents Centre and Plunket group. A research midwife skilled in liaison worked with them and representatives of the mothers' forum attended the maternity forum from then on.

### Second Crisis: Cultural Accessibility

The maternity day clinic, which had worked hard to become culturally accessible, proudly reported their improvements to the forum. However, at the following meeting the Pacific Island Midwife Advisor reported that Pacific Island mothers experienced the clinic as alienating. I coached an uncomfortable forum group to choose a small group to meet with the clinic director. They would also open discussions with the midwife advisor and a group of Pacific Island mothers to find ways of extending the gains already made. The forum accomplished this successfully.

### Third Crisis: Recognition of the Midwifery Profession's Training

A midwife, reporting a new edict requiring validation of competence from the DHB's anaesthetics department for midwives to administer epidurals, urged the forum to gain acceptance for midwifery's own professional training and validation practices. The forum agreed and the hospital general manager raised the matter with the CEO of the DHB, its departments of midwifery and anaesthetics and its solicitor. Through December and January efforts to gain approval from all parties dragged on. I coached the manager and clinical director regularly, urging them to push the system. I asserted that the fledgling forum's trust levels would fracture if it did not receive a response within two months. Eventually the DHB accepted the proposal and the forum members discovered that their consultations and actions could make a difference.

### Fourth Crisis: Working with Power Differentials

In response to a health professional's proposal, a senior DHB leader explained in a kindly and conciliatory way what he considered were the real needs of a situation. I intervened instantly, inviting the senior person to explore available options. I suggested he begin by taking the view that the other person might be differently informed, rather than inadequately informed. I coached him to appreciate her view as having intent and purpose. I pointed out that a communication offered in an explanatory form cannot avoid being dismissive. In this instance the group saw that there was substance and usefulness in the proposal, in spite of the senior man being closer to the centre of power, policy and history. At the next meeting, the chairperson caught himself offering an explanation before checking out intent and purpose. He was quick to use the learning from the previous forum, recognising the dynamic and retracing his

55

steps. The readiness of those with greater power to bend their habits to an openness that values contributions from everyone led to robust participation.

Forum members themselves were more conscious of their success in forming action groups with report times that reviewed, developed and reformed their collective practice. Notable among them was an autonomous quality improvement team. These small groups not only accomplished their tasks, they built close, strong relationships between the professional groups.

## Reflections

This is the only time an organisation has engaged me specifically for sociodrama. I approached the work expecting that the maternity community members were intelligent, compassionate, sensitive to the human spirit and committed to mothers and babies. I appreciated that birthing affirms life and accepts the reality of death. I took a whole group focus with values central to working with relationships. In becoming an audience to a staged drama of their community's life and then actors in that story, the community members oscillated between participator and spectator. They were courageously experimental, opening up to consultation and care with one another.

Psychodramatic wisdom indicates that when a community intent on building cooperative practices becomes an audience to itself, it inevitably lays bare its shared life and variety of values, re-experiences its tensions and takes hold of hot coals of conflict. In my work with this community, I set out to promote respect for others' priorities, consideration for their disparate motivations, and the discovery of shared values. I did not invite a sociodramatic question, but one was implicit. How can mothers, LMC midwives, hospital midwives and hospital medical staff work together effectively? The answer has been lived now for a full decade. I am confident that this community, reviewing and visioning together will potentiate its identity, its belief in a future and its realisation 'We are in this together'.

## Epilogue

The hospital's first public report to delegates of an Australasian women's hospitals conference affirmed the efficacy of sociodrama in bringing about dramatic improvement on every measure.

*A facilitator was employed who by training and experience with sociodrama, using psycho-dramatic methods, was able to guide a conversation including everyone's personal experiences, values, and attitudes. Replay of actual or typical incidents were set out and preferred practice explored. The focus was on the rights of the mother and baby and the role of the professionals to see this as a priority. It was seen by all as a success in opening the channels for communication.*

Thomas & Stacey (2002:5)

It is not very often that a client group attests to the efficacy of sociodrama in an international journal. In their writing, these authors noted that many were fearful in the lead up to the Big Day Out. However:

> Participants role-played labour room crises, slowing down time to allow exploration of interactions, behaviours, beliefs and difficulties in communication. At times, the tension was electrifying . . . A midwife, role-playing an obstetrician, declared . . . Now that I know we share values, it will be much easier for us to work together in the future' . . . a monthly, multidisciplinary Maternity Forum — helped by the same facilitator — was agreed. Forum members continued to confront and modify beliefs about others' behaviour and received and acted on feedback about their own. The first Forum was characterized by more conflict and heightened emotions. Feedback from the facilitator allowed us to recognise our behaviour and explore the often-false beliefs underlying our reaction.
>
> Youngson, Stacey & Wimbrow (2003:398-399)

> Our experience suggests that understanding your own and others views and beliefs; valuing others' contributions and being open to challenge are as important to quality improvement as the possession of robust data if the aim is to make changes to working practices that lead to significant improvements for patients . . . Effective leaders focus efforts on creating new experiences that challenge personal beliefs and lead to new behaviours and new results. In adulthood, personal beliefs are relatively fixed and require a significant emotional event to change. In the role-play workshop and subsequent forums, we intervened in a dramatic way to expose conflicting beliefs and create new, shared experience that reinforced common goals and collaborative behaviours. None of this is for the faint-hearted! Courage was required to manage high levels of interpersonal conflict, anger and blame but the expression of strong emotion was a necessary part of the process in changing beliefs.
>
> Youngson, Stacey & Wimbrow (2003:400)

The positive outcomes of the Big Day Out were even reported in the *New Zealand Listener* eight years after the event.

> . . . something extraordinary happened. Relationships healed, caesarean rates fell to 15%, and babies . . . went from having some of the worst health outcomes immediately after birth to having the best in Australasia.
>
> Leah Haines (2009:14-15)

I have been in somewhat of an ethical conundrum regarding my wish to name this maternity community. On the one hand I have had to consider the confidentiality requirements of the *ANZPA Journal* while on the other my ethical duty to reference writers. The community deserves to be heralded strongly. A Crisis in Maternity Services: The Courage to be Wrong was their article leading into the 2004 Quality and Safety in Health Care Conference. The courage to be wrong is a proud and honourable watchcry for this healthcare community. They

determined to be open with clients and wider communities regarding their failures and successes. This ethic led them to banish blame with naming and shaming, and to create a community that takes responsibility for each failure through thorough, open enquiry and shared learning.

The community is richly entitled to be proud of the achievements of the Big Day Out and the developments that followed it. Everyone contributed with vigour and unrelenting determination. Hospital and community midwifery leaders made wise and powerful contributions. The hospital's general manager and her clinical director deserve particular mention. The mothers' forum was a great strength. The maternity forum worked diligently to create a positive culture. More recently the forum itself has been retired, and management structures and personnel have changed. The community's goodwill and mutual trust though have stood the test of time. New challenges and initiatives will no doubt continue to occur.

## Postscript to the Epilogue

I was delighted to receive acknowledgement of article drafts and a personal endorsement from a key participant in these events. Speaking of the results of the sociodramatic interventions, he writes:

> *The goodwill and collaborative relationships in maternity persist strongly to this day, as do the excellent clinical outcomes. Almost all of the same players are still there. I have resigned from the DHB and had a touching farewell from people connected with the maternity service. About 25 met for dinner, including many of the participants in the original big day out. The self-employed LMC, who initiated the joint letter to management, and was so courageous in the big day out, became my daughter's midwife. The things I learned from you have been widely applied and taught to others.*
>
> R. Youngson (Personal Communication, 2011)

### END NOTES

1. In ethology I learned that troop and pack animals will accept aliens only when marked by their leaders, who physically put their scent on them. I have noticed that people are only likely to accept and receive from an outside facilitator or trainer if their organisation's leader has properly introduced and taken responsibility for them being there.

2 . When working sociodramatically, we have the resource of Jacob Moreno's (1977) spontaneity development theory to assist us. He provides clues to making incisive assessments of the underlying motivations of role interactions. Sociodramatic attention is primarily focused on the whole group, its interactive networks, cultural patterns and common and disparate values. A specific interaction may invite a zoom in on an individual for open investigation. The approach taken by the director will determine the likelihood of an open response. The director's ability to recognise the level of spontaneity and the phase of spontaneity development to which the person

has returned in response to their social context, will assist in the engagement of that group member. In this instance I approach a competent senior health professional and also view him as functioning at a role taking level and in the developmental phase of the matrix of all identity, where he echoes a preverbal world of experience. I move gently alongside to enter his universe, recognising his vulnerability. For further elucidation, see Reekie (2007, 2009 & <donreekie. com>) and Turner (2008).

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# Responses to the Threat of Climate Change: A Sociodramatic Exploration

*Katerina Seligman*

### Abstract

Katerina Seligman describes a sociodrama undertaken during a residential psychodrama workshop, whereby sociodramatic questions regarding the global threat of climate change were posed, and a range of subgroup responses were explored. She begins with her personal story of exploration regarding climate change to warm the reader up to the sociodramatic enactment that follows. The author describes the way in which the enactment facilitated role reversal and a deepening of the understanding of conflicting values in relation to climate change.

### Key Words

climate change, environment, global warming, Moreno, psychodrama, role reversal, sociodrama, subgroups

> *I have a multitude of friends. Most of them aren't born yet.*
> Joanna Macy

> *No problem can be solved with the same consciousness that created it.*
> Albert Einstein

## Climate Change: The Personal Story

During 2009 I devoted almost all my waking moments to studying climate change. It was both an exhilarating and a depressing journey — exhilarating because it brought me in touch with highly educated and environmentally conscious people, depressing because I had to face the real possibility that the natural world that I love so dearly is under even more serious threat than I had previously imagined. As a nature lover I am deeply saddened that we stand to

lose a great number of living species as a direct result of climate change. Many of the world's populations, among them the poorest and least responsible for global warming, stand to lose their water supplies. Some of the world's largest cities are threatened by sea level rise. The number of climate refugees could be in the millions or even billions. These are just some of the very disturbing predictions currently being made by climate scientists.

As a response to this disturbing information I became involved in political actions to encourage our government to take the matter seriously and to raise public awareness about the urgency of the issue. Drawing on my science background, I joined with a colleague to conduct a number of local seminars entitled The Basics of Climate Science, in the hope that participants would understand the science better and therefore be more likely to take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I also made efforts to reduce my own personal carbon foot print. Rather idealistically, I decided to stop flying since air travel produces vast quantities of harmful emissions. Then I received news that my mother was dying and I felt I had no choice but to fly to Melbourne to be with her in her final hours. I decided to travel to our psychodrama trainer development workshop by land-based public transport. This took two days of travel by bus, boat and train, and cost more than twice as much as a budget airfare. It was an enjoyable experience but I nevertheless decided to fly home. I went to my local supermarket to buy a bottle of wine. Faced with the choice of buying local wine or purchasing wine from the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, I chose to buy the latter knowing full well that it had travelled hundreds of kilometres to reach the supermarket shelf. I annually consume many times my body weight in food which has travelled environmentally damaging distances to reach me. With this awareness, I entered the Eat Local Foods Challenge sponsored by our district council, and for 5 weeks I tried to eat only foods grown and produced within a 200 kilometre radius. This meant giving up coffee, chocolate, most grains and many other food items. I failed to eat 100% local, but nevertheless won the competition! Since then I have definitely incorporated some new buying and eating habits into my daily life. However I have also reverted to eating some foods which have travelled many kilometres to my table. This is one of the conundrums that I face on a daily basis. My somewhat inadequate attempts to change my own behaviours have clarified for me the huge challenges that we, the global community, face in making adequate responses to the unprecedented crisis of climate change[1].


## A Group Focus on the Environment

With these issues and questions in mind, I decided to address the environment and climate change during a four day residential psychodrama workshop in October 2010. The group was open to psychodrama trainees as well as others wanting to experience the psychodrama method. As climate change is a social

issue I knew that I would be working sociodramatically to explore our collective as well as our individual responses to this situation.

Sociodrama is an application of the methods created by Dr J.L. Moreno. Moreno viewed sociodrama as a way in which to engage people in specific dramatic activities in order to evoke discussions, explorations and enactments of solutions to issues of conflict (Kellerman, 1998). Sociodrama is a "group approach . . . of analysing and treating social problems" (Moreno, 1977). "The sociodrama . . . starts from within the audience present and is calculated to be educational, clarifying and energising to all members. It serves as a stimulus to spontaneity, creativity . . . and empathy, and as a check and balance to cultural tensions . . . arising from local or world-wide events. It is a means for social catharsis and integration" (Moreno, 1993:88).

In the workshop's promotion I included an emphasis on opening to, and being nourished by the natural world. Potential participants knew there would be specific time for meditation in a natural environment during the workshop. The group members thus arrived warmed up to some degree to an environmental focus. I chose to focus on climate change itself on the third day of the workshop because this coincided with a global day of climate action on the 10th day of the 10th month 2010, coordinated by the organisation 350.org.nz.

## Warming Up the Group

Introducing the group warm up, I spoke about my own journey of discovery about climate change and invited responses from the group. One participant likened society's 'head in the sand' response to global warming to an active addict's denial of their addiction, but on a much larger scale. She referred to the work of Anne Wilson Schaef (1987,1988) and expressed the view that society is in a state of collective denial regarding the destruction of the planet's natural systems. As with an addicted person, this denial and other unconscious defence mechanisms are allowing our destructive behaviours to continue. In response, other participants reflected on the parallels between the more commonly recognised drug and process addictions, for example alcoholism and workaholism, and the 'cultural addiction' we have to the excessive use of fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful behaviours.

Building on this theme, we set out on the sociodramatic stage the five stages of addiction recovery, pre-contemplation, contemplation, planning, action and maintenance (Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992). Participants reflected on their experiences of effective and ineffective interventions with addicted people in relation to the five stages. One participant highlighted the need to make interventions which are appropriate to a person's consciousness when facilitating the movement from one stage of recovery to the next. For example, if a person is at the pre-contemplative stage, only interventions that will assist them to begin to contemplate the existence of their addiction are appropriate.

# Distress and Empowerment

After these somewhat theoretical considerations, the focus became more personal. I asked participants to share with one another, in pairs and then in the whole group, their own personal experiences and responses to environmental degradation. In the group sharing participants spoke deeply about:

- Frustration with flat mates who wantonly waste electricity.
- Memories of deep grief experienced during childhood after watching the movie *Watership Down*.
- Grief in response to special natural places that have been seriously degraded or are threatened with degradation.
- Distress at the continued loss of endangered wild life.
- Anguish when viewing scenes of mudslides obliterating whole villages.

One group member wept and expressed feelings of grief, fear and helplessness in the face of the environmental threats the world is currently facing. Some group members responded with similar distressing emotions, while others became guarded and self-protective, expressing resignation. I found this an appropriate time to bring in the work of Joanna Macy (1991). Macy maintains that distressing feelings, experienced in response to major global threats, demonstrate the capacity to have compassion for all living things and the planet itself. The distress, she claims, is a normal and necessary aspect of the move towards empowerment, rather than a sign of personal weakness or neurosis. This positive mirroring validated the experiences of some group participants and enabled them to become more thoughtful, while still valuing their emotional responses.

Macy's work has been enormously validating and empowering in my personal climate change journey. Allow me for a moment to interrupt my description of this group session to elaborate on some of her thinking. Macy notes that people who question the sanity of what we are doing may be viewed as negative, neurotic, morbid, boring or crazy. In her view, the acknowledgment of grief, despair and fear for the future is a kind of social taboo which means such feelings are rarely expressed directly. The dread remains on the fringes of awareness, too deep to name, too fearsome to face. As a result there is an impoverishment of emotional and sensory life, and a block to our capacity to process and respond to information. Our imaginations, which are needed for fresh visions and strategies, are impeded. She suggests that rather than grabbing for sedatives, ideologies or simplistic solutions, we learn to look at things as they are, painful and overwhelming as that may be. She postulates that no healing can begin until we become fully present to our world, until we learn to sustain the gaze. Many of us fear that confrontation with despair will bring loneliness and isolation. To the contrary, Macy notes that in the letting go of old defences truer community emerges. We are empowered to move towards effective action.

Anyone who has experienced psychodrama to any depth will be aware of the parallels between Macy's ideas and those of J.L. Moreno. Moreno encouraged

people to move away from robotic, conserved ways of doing things. His methods stimulate the imagination and encourage in depth feeling and truthful expression. Psychodrama has the effect of unifying our beings. We come out of isolation, healing and strengthening our relationships past and present, and as in Macy's work, developing a true sense of community.

## A Sociodrama Focused on Climate Change

The in depth sharing described above warmed the group members up to the sociodrama which followed. I asked participants to reflect on emerging questions and after some sharing and discussion the group identified two sociodramatic questions, which were written up on a whiteboard.

- How can we live effectively and vibrantly in an insecure and uncertain world?
- How can I use my abilities effectively to influence cultural change towards creating a sustainable world?

I invited participants to step onto the sociodramatic stage and express their values in response to the issue of climate change. As the first participant took up this invitation, the others joined her in entering the world of the particular subgroup that she was representing. They took up the roles inherent in its culture, exchanging thoughts and feelings and becoming conscious of the values of that subgroup. After a short while, a participant moved to separate herself and represent a different subgroup and once again was joined by the others to explore the thoughts, feelings and world view of that new group. Other subgroups emerged in a similar way, in an atmosphere of high spontaneity and involvement. Each subgroup was named as it emerged. In identifying a new subgroup, participants did not always express their own values but attempted to represent other groups that they had observed in society. As the director of the sociodrama, I took care that participants avoided stereotyping. I coached the participants to leave their usual world view aside and to enter the world of each subgroup as genuinely and deeply as possible, to gain a real sense of the experiences, motivations and value systems that are alive there and thus begin the process of role reversal.

The following 10 subgroups emerged during the sociodrama and were recorded on the whiteboard:

- *Environmentally Aware, Limit-Setting Comfort Preservers*: I'm doing my bit. I already recycle, use energy efficient light bulbs, cycle when I can, and I'm not willing to inconvenience myself or my family any further.
- *Believers in Human Superiority and Progress*: Human intelligence puts us above other living things. Human technology, progress and growth are invaluable and are to be pursued and applauded.
- *Philosophical Fatalists*: The planet and life on it will go on in some form or

other and it doesn't matter if humans and other life forms don't survive.

- *Survival Oriented Pragmatists*: We need to learn to grow our own food, and develop small self-sufficient resilient communities within towns and cities so that we have the best chance of survival when the climate crisis and peak oil really hit home.
- *Carefree Hedonists*: There's no point worrying. Might as well just have a good time. The powers that be/governments/scientists will sort it out.
- *Scientific Realists*: Unless we all take drastic action immediately, life as we know it will come to an end. But there is no point in frightening people.
- *Spiritualists*: Surviving humans will transcend this existence and move to a higher state of consciousness.
- *Environmental Activists*: Humans are a part of an interconnected ecosystem and the world needs each person to take responsibility for their own environmental footprint and to act politically to raise awareness in other individuals, organisations and in policymakers.
- *Day to Day Survivors*: Surviving day to day reality is challenging and all-consuming enough. I have no time or energy to even think about anything else.
- *Naïve Nature-Loving Enthusiasts*: This group comprises children and adults who are excited about the natural world and care for it.

During the setting out of subgroups, participants were highly animated and thoroughly involved. With the high level of warm up, we could have continued bringing out more subgroups. We could also have enacted role reversals between subgroups. However I decided to bring the enactment phase of the sociodrama to a close, as I wanted to avoid too much complexity and the potential for chaos on the sociodramatic stage. I reflected that we had achieved the sociodrama's purpose, which was to engage in an in depth exploration of the different world views that exist regarding climate change.


## Waking Up to Personal Values and Role Reversing with Others

The group then embarked on the sharing phase of the sociodrama. Some participants shared that experiencing and naming the subgroups resulted in them waking up more fully to their own values regarding this challenging issue. Some participants shared that they had a deeper understanding and acceptance of others, whose values they had previously rejected. Some expressed surprise at the degree of animation and involvement they had experienced.

It was clear that the process of taking up the roles of other subgroups required participants to reverse roles very fully with people who hold different world views. Although they did not come to final answers to the sociodramatic questions that had been posed, the participants had made beginning steps

towards appreciating, in a real and lively way, the complexity of the cultural responses to climate change. Group members had begun to engage with the sociodramatic questions posed during the warm up. How can we live effectively and vibrantly in an insecure world? How can I use my abilities effectively to influence cultural change towards creating a sustainable world?

Several weeks after the workshop one participant reported that she felt much less reserved about discussing climate change with friends and family. "I've been holding on to expressing how concerned I feel so it has had definite effects on my awareness and expression." Another participant commented on the "total" way in which she was involved and enlivened during the enactment. She reported that she is now much readier to take action in her own life. Others reported an increased awareness in their daily activities such as conserving fuel and recycling. I was heartened by these small shifts as a result of the sociodrama, whilst also remaining aware that much larger scale solutions are also needed.

## Fostering Sustainable Behaviour

Since the workshop, I have become enthused by the idea that behavioural change happens when people make a small commitment, because this 'changes the way they view themselves' (McKenzie-Mohr, 2010). Person to person contact and zero pressure or coercion are essential ingredients in the process of creating new societal norms. Moreno's work clearly has a part to play in this regard. Psychodramatic and sociodramatic enactments enable people to sustain their gaze on uncomfortable cognitions and emotions, to examine the roles they themselves play, and to role reverse with negatively valued roles. They assist people to develop progressive roles and identities, and thus contribute towards new values and progressive societal norms. As psychodramatists and sociodramatists, we are in a powerful position to facilitate movement towards a more sustainable society.

## Conclusion

The responses to the global threat of climate change are varied. There is a need to enter into the world of those who hold views and values that are different from our own, and to stay in emotional contact with them. It is through having the courage to experience our responses to uncomfortable realities and to role reverse with others who have different responses, that we are able to influence societal norms towards a paradigm shift which would offer hope for our endangered planet and the future generations who will inherit it.

*ENDNOTES*

1. This article originally included a two page literature survey on the psychological responses to

climate change and a one page appendix that briefly and simply summarised the generally poorly understood basics of climate science. If you would like copies, please contact the author (see below).

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67

# History on a Bus

## USING SOCIODRAMA TO ADDRESS RACISM AND RECONCILIATION

### HELEN KEARINS

#### ABSTRACT

In Sydney's Redfern Park on the 10th of December 1992, the launch of the International Year of Indigenous People, the then Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating delivered a ground breaking speech that gave great hope to people working for reconciliation with Aboriginal Australians. One of those inspired to continue this work, Helen Kearins developed a workshop that assists participants to own racism and move beyond it towards genuine reconciliation with Aboriginal people. In this article, adapted from her 2011 AANZPA Accreditation thesis, she demonstrates the efficacy of sociodrama in this work.

## Setting the Scene

On my way to or from work in Sydney, I often drive past Redfern Park. Many Australians associate the suburb of Redfern with a stereotype of Aboriginal poverty and dysfunction. Apart from the fact that the stereotype is grossly inaccurate, I have a very different association with Redfern Park. It was here on the 10th December 1992 that Prime Minister Paul Keating gave a speech, often referred to now as the Redfern Park Speech, to launch the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People. I was there.

The speech was significant because it was the first time that an Australian prime minister had acknowledged that, "...the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians". He went on to say, "It begins I think with an act of recognition" and to name the elements in need of recognition. He emphasised the opportunity provided by this international year to address the injustices suffered by indigenous Australians and to continue working towards reconciliation.

As part of progressing reconciliation The Sisters of Mercy, for whom I was working at the time, decided to engage in 'a process of education' regarding entrenched White racism. I planned a series of workshops with Mercy groups and agencies around Australia titled, Owning Our Own Racism and Moving Beyond It. This article, related in the present tense, draws on workshop experiences to demonstrate the efficacy of sociodrama in enabling White Australians to take the first steps beyond racism towards reconciliation with the indigenous Aboriginal people.

## Warming Up to the Reconciliation Workshop

Prior to the workshop, I send invitations to leaders of Mercy congregations inviting them to host a workshop that includes Mercy communities, colleagues and others who share an interest in reconciliation. In bringing together people of a common vision, I hope that there will be reflection and the creation of new steps towards reconciliation. My intention is to warm participants up to the reality of 'restrictive solutions' where fear is already present and offer the possibility of moving beyond them to 'enabling solutions', where the progressive roles of *willing relater, value-based reflective practitioner, safe and open learner, effective change agent* and *respectful collaborative reconciler* might be present.

All the participants, some known to one another and some not, have an affiliation with the Sisters of Mercy so have a shared value base underpinned by compassion and a commitment to social justice. They include teachers, educational administrators, consultants, nurses, social workers, retirees, Sisters of Mercy and Guide Dog Association members. The latter have seen an increase in the number of Aboriginal people using their services due to diabetes related blindness.

At the beginning, I observe that the workshop focus on racism may hold some embarrassment and shame but that it also offers the hope that we can work together and find new ways to move beyond it. I invite the participants to share in twos and threes their purposes in being present. I observe that some have come from the same organisations with a diversity of intentions. The group members enact roles such as *delighted companion, welcoming group member, eager explorer* and *attentive learner* which indicate strong connections, good levels of spontaneity and a readiness to engage in the work. These all contribute to a healthy level of safety in the group.

I continue to build on this safety by outlining the overall process for the day. I observe that some participants are familiar with it and others by nods and positive murmurs indicate readiness. I notice people becoming more relaxed, especially when they hear my assurance that their experience can be shared but will not be judged. As we move forward, I hold a sociodramatic question in mind. Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal people, how can we move forward towards reconciliation?

32

## Warming Up to Sociodramatic Exploration with Stories of Racism

I invite participants to remember a time when they were affected by racism towards an Aboriginal person. This might be a direct experience or a reported account, because I recognise that many Australians have no direct encounters with Aboriginal people. Participants share in pairs and the stories are then shared in the group.

- A radio report about an Aboriginal actor who was pulled up by police and interrogated roughly, apparently because he was black and driving a late model car.
- An Aboriginal woman who told her friend about the checkout person who always put the change on the counter, never into her hand.
- An Aboriginal woman who grew up in a mission related the way that Aboriginal women were obliged to walk fifty kilometres to the hospital when they were due to give birth and were put in a section of the hospital separate from White mothers.
- An Aboriginal man taken from his family related how as a little boy in Kinsela Boys Home, he and the other inmates were not provided with shoes. On freezing mornings as they brought the cows in for milking they would stand in the fresh cow dung to warm their feet.
- A White woman tells the story of a bus driver who made no apology to ten Aboriginal passengers and two other White passengers for keeping them waiting three hours, in the early hours of the morning, at a bus stop in Halls Creek, Western Australia.

During the telling of the stories, I observe that the pairs are very attentive and respectful. There is a growing softness in the group, observable in participants' body language and tone of voice. As the stories are shared in the whole group, I perceive with growing excitement the roles of *relieved truth teller, embarrassed sorrowful witness of racism, active listener, non-judgemental companion, purposeful contributor, anxious searcher for a better way of relating, open curious learner* and *secure explorer of new possibilities*. This tells me that the group is ready to move into an exploration of the restrictive system that may shed some light on the sociodramatic question.

## The Sociodramatic Enactment
### Setting Out the System

Based on its connection to other stories, the level of affect and the potential for displaying a broader social system, I select the story of Emily, the woman at the Halls Creek bus stop. My purpose in directing this sociodramatic enactment is to explore the restrictive social system that is created by racism. Emily promises to be a good protagonist for the group in this regard as she holds both the

motivating force and the reactive fear in her being. She describes the scenario thus:

Emily*: I have lived and worked with Aboriginal people in the Kimberley area of Western Australia for many years. On this occasion I was waiting at Halls Creek for a bus that was due at midnight but didn't arrive till 3.00am. Also waiting were two other White Australians and about ten Aborigines. Even though I knew several of the Aborigines, as the waiting time stretched into the early hours of the morning I became increasingly anxious.*

In my mind I see two separate groups, the White and the Aboriginal Australians, waiting at the bus stop. This helps me to name the system subgroups and orientate to the tele relationships between them, as illustrated in Diagram I below.

DIAGRAM 1: THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF PASSENGERS AT THE BUS STOP
SHOWING SUBGROUPS AND TELE RELATIONSHIPS



Legend: + positive, o neutral, - negative
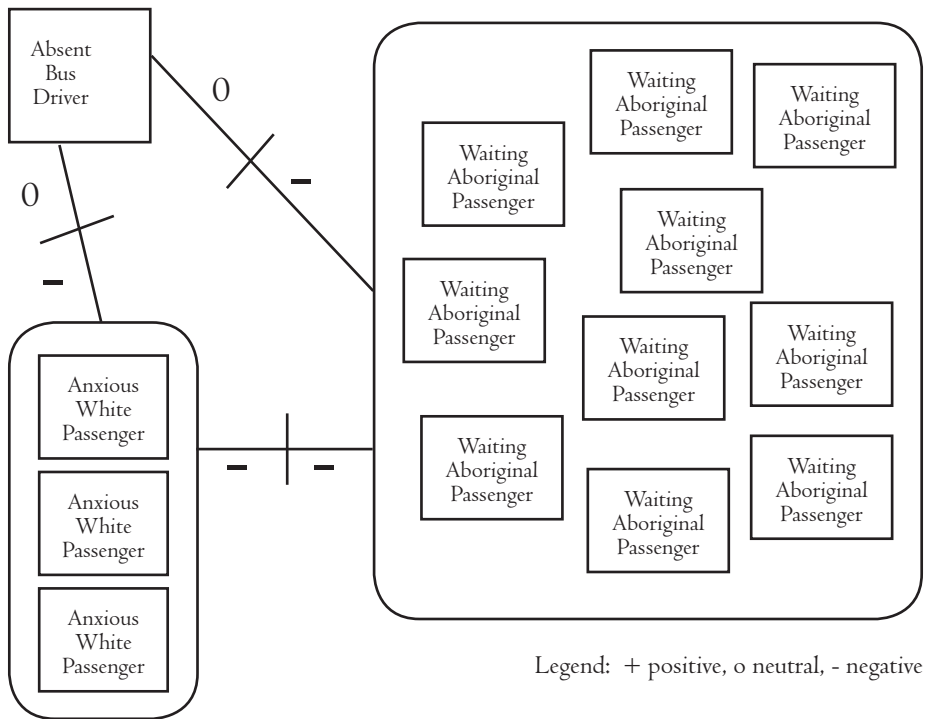
The role relations within each group are generally positive. The usually neutral or positive tele between the two groups shifts to negative as a result of the White

34

passengers' increasing anxiety, which turns to fear as the hours pass. As events later demonstrate, the bus driver was neutral towards both groups and both groups were negative towards him.

I invite Emily to step into the action space.

| | |
|---|---|
| Director | Emily, step forward … *Emily steps into the stage area* … What happened when the bus arrived? |
| Emily | Well, when the bus finally arrived, almost three hours late, I scurried onto the bus and sat directly behind the driver, for safety. So did the other White passengers. As I settled into my seat I realised I had allowed my fear to overtake me. I knew most of these (Aboriginal) people! I don't usually act like that with them. |
| Director | What happened next? |
| Emily | When everyone was on the bus we headed off. But the bus driver made no apology or explanation for being so late! |
| Director | Set up the bus … *Emily uses chairs to set out the driver's seat and passenger seats.* |
| Director | Choose someone to be the bus driver … *She does so and the auxiliary, who is very warmed up, goes directly to the driver's seat.* |
| Director | *to the auxiliary playing the bus driver* … You look as though you are well acquainted with this job. |
| Driver | Yeah. Been driving these things for twenty odd years. |
| Director | You're running a bit late tonight. |
| Driver | Yeah! Bus from Darwin was late getting to Kunnunurra. |
| Director | I noticed that you gave no explanation or apology to the passengers for arriving so late. |
| Driver | Yeah, well, most of 'em are 'blackfellas'. |
| Director | So, they don't need an explanation or apology? |
| Driver | No need to apologise. They don't matter. |
| Director | When do you think you learnt this approach to Aborigines? |
| Driver | Oh! Years ago! Me mother always told me never to play with them black kids. |
| Director | Why do you think she did that? |
| Driver | Well, you know. Couldn't be sure of them. Where they'd been. Usually a bit dirty. All that stuff. |
| Director | Choose someone to be your mother … *An auxiliary is chosen and directed to stand in relationship to her son, the bus driver.* |
| Director | *to the auxiliary playing the bus driver's mother* … Thank you for being here. I'm wondering if you can throw some light on this situation. I understand from speaking with your son that you used to tell him never to play with black kids. |
| Mother | Oh Yes. We all did. All the mothers. You just couldn't trust them. |

|          | dirty you know. And living on the edge of town. Well that's why the police had to take the children away sometimes. The parents couldn't look after them properly. |
| Director | Choose someone to be a policeman authorised to take the children away … *The auxiliary playing the mother chooses an auxiliary to be the policeman.* |
| Director | Where is the policeman in relation to you? |
| Mother   | A bit away from me. I didn't really know the police were doing this, taking the children away, at the time but I knew there were homes for Aboriginal children. The police were just doing what they had to do. |

At this point in the enactment I make a statement to the whole group, with the intention of bringing to life the historical social forces acting on the bus driver as set out in Diagram 2 opposite.

| Director | In this moment we are beginning to see the historical social forces that were impacting on the mother and through her, on the bus driver. We'll continue to build a picture of these historical and social forces. As we do, I invite you to contribute what you know about these forces. They may be particular people or groups of people or institutions. Let's continue building a picture of this social system. So, who or what gave the policeman authority to take Aboriginal children away from their families? |
| Group Member I (GMI) | The Aboriginal Protection Board. |
| Director | Come and be the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB). Place yourself in relationship to the policeman. |
| GMI | *as the APB* … I'm behind him. I give the orders and tell him which children need to be taken. |
| Director | And your purpose in doing this? |
| GMI | *as the APB* … As the name says, we're here for their (Aborigines) own protection. We know what's best for them. They can't look after their own kids. So we take the half-castes and put them in a good White family and that way they'll become good Australians. |
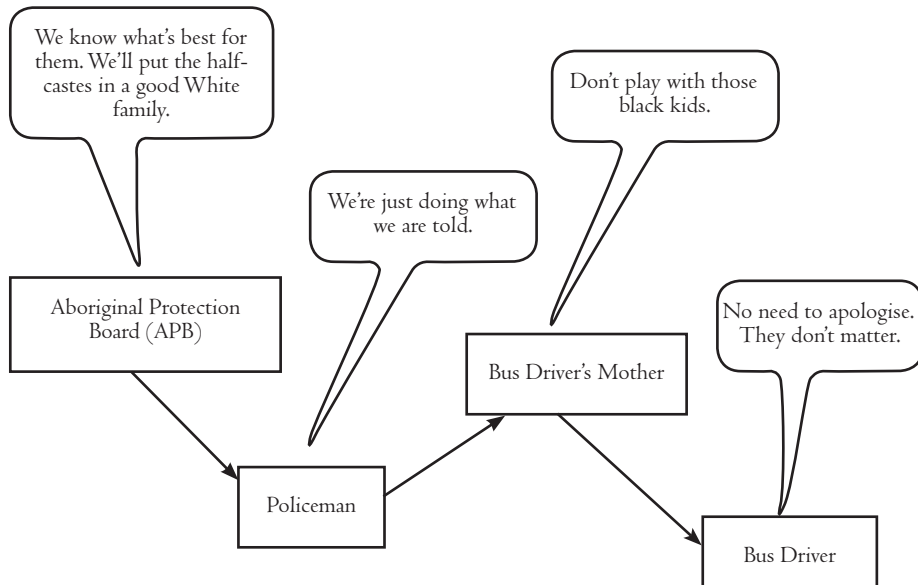
## Expanding the System

This narrative sparks animated discussion. Group members conclude that Aboriginal women were often forced into relations with White men and left to look after the resulting children with no support from their White fathers.

Director    *with curiosity* … Who are these White men? We need to make them real so we feel their lives.

Silent at first, group members then begin thoughtfully to name "these White men" variously as mission and reserve managers, squatters, farm labourers, drovers, ordinary men and government officials, any male colonist in fact who fancied 'a bit of black velvet'.

Director    Someone take up the role of the White fathers.

A group member (GM2) steps forward to take up the role of the White fathers. I interview him to fill out the socius, the values and the worldview, around this role. He had come from England but others like him hailed from Ireland and Scotland. Some had arrived as convicts and, having served their term, were now settled in the colony. Some had come as part of the military forces to keep the convicts under control while others landed as free settlers. All believed the land was empty, 'terra nullius' and theirs for the taking. There is a momentary silence

as the impact of this worldview sinks in and deepens the warm up of the participants.

Director      Who else do we need here?
Group Member 3 (GM3) *calling out* … It all started with Captain Cook!
Director      Come out and be Captain Cook.
GM3      *as Captain Cook* … I discovered the Great South Land and I
             claimed New South Wales for the British Empire!

A group member (GM4) reminds the group that William Dampier had actually landed at Cygnet Bay on the west coast of Australia in 1682. Here he met some of the Aboriginal people and recorded his impressions in his journal.

Director      *to GM4* … Take up the role of William Dampier recording his
             observations in his journal. Speak them out aloud.
GM4      *as William Dampier* … The inhabitants of this country are the
             miserablest people in the world. Setting aside their humane shape,
             they differ but little from brutes.

The group warms up to rage and shame at the naked racism displayed by the explorers and colonisers in this drama. They are named the front line force of the urge to colonise. As superiority is the driver of racism, I realise that this touches on the core purpose of the workshop, owning our own racism and moving beyond it. One of the participants advances the story by pointing out that in 1901 all the colonies on the Australian continent united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. Another adds that its first Constitution excluded Aborigines from federal legislation and from the census. I invite an auxiliary to take up the role of The Constitution and knowing that this element of the system might well emerge I have a copy of the relevant parts[1].

> Paragraph 51: *The parliament shall, subject to this constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal race, in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.*

> Paragraph 127: *In reckoning the numbers of people in the Commonwealth or of a state or other part of the Commonwealth aboriginal natives shall not be counted.*

The auxiliary is moved to tears and at times struggles to speak the words. I notice bowed heads and sympathy with her grief. Group members are seeing with new clarity the mindset that framed Australia's constitution. They recognise 'institutional racism', the belief in White superiority that is embedded in the fabric of Australian institutions, laws and practices. This is an important step in their growing awareness

38

because it shifts the focus from an individual to a systemic analysis. Rather than addressing individual racism, questions are asked regarding one another's roles in benefiting from and contributing to institutional racism.

The system of social forces acting on the bus driver, illustrated in Diagram 2 above, has now expanded to include many of the wider historical elements. I judge that it is sufficiently developed but note that something is missing. I immediately see that the Aboriginal people, on whom this system impacts, are not yet adequately present in the drama. I invite the remaining workshop participants to take up the roles of the Aboriginal passengers and "board the bus". When they are seated, I direct the other group members to take up their roles again and enact the timeline from the earliest scene of William Dampier up to the Halls Creek bus stop scenario (see Diagram 3 overleaf). As the timeline is enacted, the participants playing Aboriginal passengers sink down in their seats and as it progresses they sink ever lower.

## A Defining Moment in the Sociodrama

I am struck by the potency of this moment. As the social forces are enacted, their impact on the Aboriginal passengers is felt and movingly displayed. It is the defining moment, happening right here, right now. We have reached the sociodrama's essence. At the end of the timeline enactment I invite the group members in the roles of Aboriginal passengers, still in their 'sunk down' positions, to comment on their experience of this enactment.

Group Members *as Aboriginal passengers* . . .   I have slid down in my seat.
I'm trying to escape.
Yes, escape the pain and burden of all that history.
My head is bowed down.
I feel very little.
I'm trying to disappear.

All the participants in the sociodrama experience the full weight of the forces in this social system. The group members playing the various social forces have already been deeply affected by their roles, but now they become aware of the impact of these on the people to whom they are directed. As explorers, colonisers, lawmakers and law enforcement officers they experience firsthand the unassailable power of their position of authority and superiority. Most importantly, they witness and are moved by the effect of this power on the Aboriginal passengers and there are shocked looks and tears. Some experience the disjuncture and discomfort of reconciling this experience with their own worldviews and values. The participants playing Aboriginal passengers experience the belittling and totally

DIAGRAM 3: THE EXPANDED SYSTEM OF SOCIAL FORCES ACTING ON THE BUS DRIVER

77

demoralising effect on them of the social forces expressed by the White authority figures. Their spontaneous reaction of physically sinking down in their seats speaks louder than any words. I now close the enactment stage of the session.

## The Integration Phase of the Sociodrama

The integration phase includes the sharing of the enactment experience from both an individual and a systemic perspective.

### Individual Sharing

Group members express with some surprise and satisfaction that their experiences had been valued during the warm up. "What that did in the group experience for me was that I could actually present my own experience in a way that was totally honoured." Others express relief at seeing that so much of the racism experienced by Aborigines is institutional. "Not that it lets me as an individual off the hook but I felt relieved that I wasn't personally a racist." The reading of extracts from the constitution has deeply affected the auxiliary playing that role and brought up feelings of shame for the whole group. Some refer to it as a "profound moment" and one says, "That's when my heart started to spin". The participant who played the role of the bus driver is a little shaken by her experience. "As the bus driver, I began by enjoying it then didn't want to own that role. I was shocked that I so easily discovered my irrational feelings." There are feelings of anger at the arrogance of the explorers and colonisers and the blatant mistreatment of other human beings. Some of the anger is also related to the shame of not knowing our own history and group members ask, "Why weren't we told this at school?"

Feelings of sadness are also expressed, at what has been done to Aboriginal people, at the obduracy of the colonisers and the loss of so many opportunities to engage with the First Australians. There is also a heightened awareness, at a feeling level, of the effects of years and years of displacement and exclusion of Aborigines. This was especially experienced as the timeline was enacted and the years of cumulative oppression were observed to weigh down the Aboriginal passengers, poignantly symbolised by their sinking in their seats. Several group members ask, "If this short enactment can have that effect, what is it like for Aboriginal people who have been living with that history all their lives?" Another says, "People have carried all those little whispers of time right up to the present".

### Sharing about the System

In the sharing from a systemic perspective, participants discuss aspects of the system revealed in the drama. One is forcibly struck by the attitude of total superiority and the fact that this attitude still pervades White Australians' relations with Aborigines. Others comment and nod agreement. Some group

insidious element in this clash is that Aboriginal culture is not recognised as a culture and therefore not respected. Others note that the exertion of power over people and the total control of their lives led to powerlessness and dependency. Several participants remark on the way that the sociodrama, in capturing the historical length and depth of impact on Aboriginal people, has highlighted the extent of colonial exploitation. Other group members observe that the display of the system has made them aware of a national consciousness, that racism is institutional and goes right through society.

When asked to name subgroups in the system, participants identify explorers and empire-builders and those displaced by colonial expansion. They also see depicted in the bus scene a parallel with contemporary society where there are Black and White, those who need an apology and those who do not, those who drive the bus and those who wait to be picked up. As one person observes, "The present is affected, maybe we should say, infected, by the past". Group members grapple with this issue asking, "How do we move on from this?" At this point I pose the sociodramatic question that I have been holding. Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal people, how can we move forward towards reconciliation? Participants agree, "This is the challenge". With sufficient personal sharing and systemic analysis completed and a connection made from the enactment to the present day, I conclude the integrative phase of the sociodrama.

## Reflections on the Sociodrama and Steps to Action

We have satisfactorily concluded the stages of a sociodrama, warm up, enactment and integration. The sharing from both personal and systemic perspectives has led to an 'experiential analysis' by the group of the presenting situation and its meaning. Several of the participants note that this analysis is different from what they usually undertake, in that it is "analysis with feeling!" The sociodrama has provided participants with the experience of deep feeling in conjunction with insight and many realise the significance of this way of working. They see the systems in which they are involved with a new clarity and are open to further learning and action.

Group members begin to question what they can do about reconciliation between Aboriginal people and non-indigenous Australians. I invite them to gather in groups related to their work places or common interests. My thinking is that action will be better planned and executed in collaboration with others rather than alone. I remind participants that they are still responding to the critical sociodramatic question posed earlier. Given our history of colonialism and racism in our relations with Aboriginal People, how can we move forward towards reconciliation?

I suggest that group members plan their actions using a basic guideline. What

actions, who will take them forward and when? I am also aware that most of the participants are professional people who are well able to plan in a strategic manner. I notice their eagerness to go to the next step. They are in touch with their own progressive roles in the world. The groups work enthusiastically and each comes up with practical actions. Some are personal actions relating to Aboriginal people they know and with whom they intend to continue building relationship. Others are institutional, such as plans to review or follow through on implementation of indigenous education policies, plans to celebrate reconciliation week in schools and plans for reconciliation events in local communities. As the plans are shared in the whole group, some participants name possible resources including people, books, videos and music. These resources are listed, others added and one group member undertakes to type the list and disseminate it to all participants.

As a closure, I invite everyone to stand in a circle and make a one word or phrase statement that expresses an element of the work they take with them. A sense of companionship is palpable as people speak. I realise that a satisfying sociodrama can effectively begin to address complex social issues such as racism.

## End Notes

1. Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1901. Chapter I: Powers of the Parliament, Section 51 (xxvi) and Chapter VII: Miscellaneous, Section 127.

Helen Kearins is a qualified sociodramatist working as a group facilitator in the social justice area. She noted the potential for sociodrama when she became involved in social justice education and has used it to deepen people's understanding of a variety of issues. When time allows Helen plays the guitar and writes songs. She can be contacted at <helenkearins@gmail.com>.

80

# The Moving Forward Project

## Reflecting on the Efficacy of Sociodrama and Playback Theatre in Addressing Family Violence

### Sandra Turner and Cinnamon Boreham

### Abstract

The Moving Forward Project is a collective endeavour established in Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand to address family violence. It aims to raise awareness of the subtleties, complexities and systemic nature of domestic violence, reduce isolation for those affected by it, promote healing and strengthen moves towards change. In this article, facilitators Sandra Turner and Cinnamon Boreham describe the project's pilot programme. They discuss the way that, in designing the programme, they matched the systemic nature of family violence with the systemic perspectives of sociodrama and playback theatre. The authors also present the programme's participants and evaluation research undertaken with

## The Backdrop

In 2010 a partnership was established between the Dunedin Collaboration Against Family Violence, Stopping Violence Dunedin, the Dunedin Playback Theatre Company and the local psychodrama group. Named The Moving Forward Project, its pilot programme involved a two hour public session held every second month that focused on the complex dynamics of family violence using the mediums of sociodrama and playback theatre. Invitations were particularly offered to men undertaking domestic violence programmes, men and women involved in domestic violence and professional workers in the field. The objectives were to raise awareness of the subtleties and systemic nature of family violence, reduce isolation for those affected by it, promote healing and strengthen moves towards change. The programme was evaluated

via research questionnaires and interviews.

In this article we, the facilitators, describe The Moving Forward Project's pilot programme and its participants, introducing the reader to one in particular. We discuss the way in which the programme design matched the systemic nature of family violence with the systemic perspectives of sociodrama and playback theatre. As well, we present and reflect upon the results of the evaluation research that was undertaken at the programme's close.

## Matiu: A Story

Matiu, a young Māori man attending his first session, reported that on a previous occasion he had arrived at the door but could not come in. He said he was not sure 'what stopped him, just that he was whakamā (shy and unsure of what to expect)'. He was disappointed but had nevertheless returned for this following session. This time Matiu was able to enter the room, but with his head down he made no eye contact. Some participants were familiar to him but he felt unable to move towards them, instead sitting alone. Matiu was quiet for the first part of the session, maintaining his bowed head. He reflected the stereotypical image that some young Māori men adopt, wearing their hoodies pulled full over their heads whilst gazing at the floor. Although he clearly demonstrated that he wanted to be invisible, he also took in what was occurring.

The sociodrama was focused on valuing family Christmas traditions and passing them onto the next generation. A woman enacting the role of a grandmother expressed herself to Matiu, who had agreed to play her eight year old mokopuna (grandchild). "Your dad doesn't want you at all. You don't know where you belong. I can see you are a bold little boy and that you do things really well. I love you." Full of pride, the grandmother gazed lovingly upon Matiu and held him warmly. Matiu heard her loving words, words that were strange to hear yet nevertheless sorely longed for. He was a generous auxiliary, who despite his self-consciousness made himself available and contributed to the session. The sociodrama also benefitted Matiu. In experiencing unconditional love and acceptance, this significant moment provided him with much that was missing in his own life.

Later, during the playback theatre, an invitation was issued for one more story before closure. Matiu, head still bowed, got up, took the teller's chair and proceeded to tell his story. "This will be the first Christmas in six years with my family. I have been in jail. I want to leave my old ways behind. It's time to have a change of heart. In my family it was bash first and ask later. The path I am going down is just the same. It is bad. It's a transition time for me to make myself healthy. I'm leaving my old life (gangs) to be with my real family. I want to make the change." The playback conductor asked what this might be like for him and Matiu replied, "No violence. No hurting other people". The performance began as one actor took up the role of the gang, another represented Matiu's whānau

(family) and a third played Matiu. The gang's seductive quality was enacted, graphically illustrating its hold over Matiu. As he sat in the witness position he saw himself with his back to his whānau, rejecting them for life in the gang. The karanga (call) came from his family. "Come home Matiu. Come home." The tension was mirrored to him as the actor playing Matiu fell again into the arms of the gang whilst challenging the whānau. "Where were you when I needed you? They (the gang) were here for me." The karanga became stronger. "Matiu, we love you. Come home." Matiu replied, "I don't know the way back". The whānau responded, "Get on my back. I will carry you. We love you. Come home". At the drama's end all three actors held the tension, potently illustrating Matiu's ongoing struggle. Matiu was engrossed. The conductor asked, "Is this how it is?" "Yes", he clearly replied. More fully in his body, he was able to hold eye contact with the actors and speak directly to the conductor. The audience was powerfully affected by Matiu's story. During the social and refreshments time afterwards, many moved towards him with warmth and respect. Here was healing for Matiu, healing for others, a community healing itself.

## Family Violence: Systemic in Nature

It is an easy and seemingly logical idea that the person who commits the violent act is the one who is wrong and then not a big leap to 'the wrong person is a bad person'. Labelling reduces the complex and rich tapestry that is an individual, leaving them with a one-dimensional self-image. When this happens we are using a person's behaviour to define them, dismissing not only their goodness but also the systemic influences. We know that roles are enacted within a context and events are located within a system. Family violence is systemic in nature and this is acknowledged by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (2012).

> There is no single causal factor or theory that can adequately explain, in isolation, the presence or absence of all types and forms of family violence. Rather, many factors interacting in a complex way contribute to the occurrence of violence in families/whānau. Factors include: systemic and environmental variables, such as inequality, patriarchy, the impact of colonisation, and discrimination; and variables, such as power imbalances /differences and personal/psychological characteristics/traits/attributes.

## Sociodrama and Playback Theatre: Systemic Perspectives

Psychodrama, sociodrama and playback theatre involve systemic perspectives. Underlying their methodologies is a core belief in the creative genius of every person, their worth appreciated and strengthened. Auxiliary roles are enacted in present time to assist in social atom repair. The key is being deliberate regarding what we create in the world with those with whom we come into contact.

74

Sociodrama specifically explores social issues confronting communities. Sternberg and Garcia (1989:12) provide a clear definition.

> Sociodrama … *taps into the truth about humanity that we are more alike than we are different. Sociodrama helps people to clarify values, problem solve, make decisions, gain greater understanding … and become more spontaneous and playful.*

Through the ages, storytelling has enabled communities and individuals to process life events and come to know themselves. The ability to tell a life story is strongly linked to good mental health (Holmes, 2001). The more coherent the telling the more mastery of one's life is developed. As we tell our stories, the belief systems that shape our behaviours emerge and become accessible to change. Playback theatre is a form of community theatre based on this philosophy. Actors 'play back' audience members' unrehearsed stories, using improvisational theatre and music to portray depth and multiple layers. Used around the world to facilitate social change through the telling, hearing and playing back of stories, it can assist a community to address bullying in schools, heal the aftermath of a disaster or celebrate its history.

Given that family violence occurs within a wider social system, the invaluable systemic focus of sociodrama and playback theatre is well suited to its exploration and healing. These methods were therefore utilised by the Moving Forward Project to focus on some of the issues associated with domestic violence during the pilot programme's six sessions. The issues included the effects on a young child when parents and step-parents are at war with one another, the way that a family manages the absence of a father and the arrival of a 'new dad' and the determination of acceptable compromises when meeting another person who holds different values. Sociodrama and playback theatre assisted audience members to process family violence stories as victims, perpetrators and witnesses. Matiu's story was one of them.

## Participants in the Moving Forward Project's Pilot Programme

Over the six sessions of the programme 34 people attended, 24 women and 10 men aged from 16 to 65 years with 20% identifying primarily as Māori. Nationally, Māori comprise 14.6% and in Dunedin 6.2% of the population (Statistics New Zealand 2006 Census). As well as reflecting our links with members of the Māori community in Dunedin, we took this to mean that the project was more than usually accessible to Māori. However, there were no Pacific Island attendees, indicative perhaps of our weak connections to that community. Approximately 13 of the 34 participants were currently experiencing violence in their lives, although only two openly acknowledged this. We knew that two of the women routinely experienced partner initiated verbal and physical abuse,

that some participants had never questioned their physical punishment of children and that one participant missed several sessions because of intimidation from her partner.

Those who did not disclose their experiences of violence may have felt ashamed. However, it is more likely that some were unwilling or unable to fully comprehend what constitutes a definition of violence, partly because this was such a common occurrence in their lives. There were many who witnessed violence in their extended families but did not see this as impacting on themselves. Sixteen participants identified as professional programme providers, counsellors, social workers, domestic violence workers, mental health workers or corrections staff and of these, six were currently experiencing violence in their own lives. Of the 18 identifying as non-professional, seven were currently experiencing family violence and seeking help from woman's refuges, domestic violence programmes or individual therapists.

There are strong cultural norms within the helping professions of valuing professional boundaries and avoiding dual relationships with clients. More often than not, the source of these norms is a lack of trust and sense of vulnerability arising from under resourcing or doubt as to a professional's ability to manage herself amidst the complexity of relationships. Despite this, we had been deliberate in inviting participants from the client group and the group of helping professionals to participate together. We saw value in challenging the idea that the client group was the only one struggling with the issues of domestic violence. The stigma of being the client and the privilege and protection afforded the professional helper serve to reinforce old stereotypes and keep a binary map of the world in place. The distances between these and other subgroups at the sessions were palpable. Social workers kept themselves apart from the offenders, Māori distanced themselves from Tauiwi (non-Māori), clients avoided the professional therapists and a number of women stayed distant from the men. Despite these significant challenges the sociodrama and playback sessions, where equal and personal participation was encouraged and expected, succeeded in creating a learning experience for everyone.

## Evaluating the Moving Forward Project's Pilot Programme

The Moving Forward Project's pilot programme was assessed through qualitative research. Outcomes data, collected from questionnaires and interviews with a cross-section of participants, is organised here into nine themes with interview quotes presented first, followed by commentary and reflection.

### Factors that Made Attendance Attractive

*It was a break from the house and an opportunity to meet people.*
*I felt safe.*

76

*I wanted a place to go on a Friday night, not the pub, a place to make friends and aid my recovery.*
*I wanted help to deal with things.*
*I trusted the facilitators.*
*It was a level playing field. It was okay for everyone to speak.*
*I wanted to develop as a facilitator.*
*I wanted to be generous and contribute.*
*It was free.*

Despite the challenging environment, the facilitators were able to create a safe and engaging group space that allowed everyone to participate in their own way. This is no small thing. We learnt over time to attend carefully to the warm up of the group and to deliberately build the sociometric links. Both facilitators were held in high regard in the community and this was critical to attracting the range of participants who attended. Our modelling of openly enjoying relationships with people across the different subgroups was particularly influential.

There is a hunger within the wider community for opportunities to learn and progress. After a rehabilitation programme for drug dependency or domestic violence, participants require a place to go where they can interact with like-minded people who are also pursuing a healthy life. The option of individual therapy is only available to those with an extra $80 plus per week in their budget. This effectively eliminates whole sectors of the community. Our cost free policy enabled many people to attend who would normally be excluded. The programme also offered community workers, group facilitators, probation officers, counsellors and students a rich opportunity to participate and to learn experientially about group process and family violence dynamics. An alcohol and drug free space was important to many participants. We provided an environment where people could talk honestly about a range of sensitive issues and be confident of being well responded to.

### Factors that Acted as Barriers to Attendance

*Lack of child care.*
*Problems with transport.*
*Complications of managing dual roles.*
*Feelings of insecurity in the open group.*

We were well aware of the financial hardship that many participants experienced and though we worked to mitigate this, it could not be eliminated. Transport was arranged for some but the provision of childcare was outside our resources. The complication of managing dual roles meant that two people elected not to continue. In both these situations this was a good decision, indicating an

appreciation of the limits of possibility. Being in an open group with the potential for clients and their professional workers to meet was challenging for some. It is accepted practice that the primary relationship must be protected and that good professional boundaries be maintained. In many cases this can lead to rigidity that effectively excludes all contact with the client group outside of the professional setting. Moreno's (1978) teachings were based on the encounter,

it is possible to be involved in a mixed group when one is able to hold relationship with authenticity and flexibility. However, the two participants who struggled with the open group had just begun recovery and required the safety of a closed group.

## Personal Development

> *I had my voice in the first sociodrama. I was surprised, shocked and delighted.*
> *I took my experiences to my therapy* (the longing for an absent mother or father and the place of the neglected child were shared by many).
> *It stimulated me to look at more things in myself.*
> *Got me to wonder what I had done to my children.*
> *I learnt that children have to come first. I have a new respect for children.*
> *I saw how children get used. They are an excuse to have a go.*
> *I learnt there is a lot of power in being a victim. I've begun to surrender my victimhood.*
> *I'm having pretty nice chats with my mother and keeping in more contact.*
> *I needed to go back and feel the emotional pain. I have since gone back into therapy.*

Following the playback and sociodrama sessions it was inevitable that participants would reflect on their own feelings and responses. It was only later, through the interviews, that we came to know of some of the profound reverberations this occasioned in their lives. Playing a family member, a child, an estranged parent or an abuser in a sociodrama caused people to look at their own behaviours, past and present. In playing the roles of children participants role reversed, sometimes for the first time and this had positive significance for the children in their lives and also for the child they had each been. This increased awareness of the needs of children in domestic violence systems had many outcomes. Overall, there was a new respect for children and a willingness to own one's own actions. Social atom repair occurred between parents and their children and between adults and their parents. A number of participants actively sought therapy as a result of the sessions, whilst those in therapy were re-stimulated. This heightened awareness of personal functioning occurred for the professionals in the group as much as it did for anyone else. With increased consciousness, these practitioners' clinical responses became more considered.

## Development of Insights into Family Violence

*Everyone's story is different.*
*Everyone plays a role. However, not everyone is a willing participant.*
*I understand how complex it is now.*
*It helped me to be softer with my own family when violence is being acted out.*
*Family violence gets generalised with assumptions that everyone's experience is the same.*

Many myths exist regarding family violence. A typical question asked of a woman who remains in a violent relationship is, "Why does she stay?" This puts the onus on the woman to make the intervention, often further isolating her and leaving her with limited options. There are other naive assumptions that stereotype those impacted by family violence such as, only men perpetrate family violence, all perpetrators of violence are cruel bullies who don't care, perpetrators only do this to gain power and control over others in their family and only Māori practise family violence.

In the sociodrama and playback sessions individual stories emerged and were valued by the group. As well, the more subversive aspects of family violence were highlighted. Group members moved from a simplistic understanding to appreciating the complexities that are always present. They developed a greater ability to see the system as a whole, primarily reducing judgment and promoting the ability to role reverse. This outcome, which was evident across the client, practitioner and general public subgroups, was significant. From a relatively small input, participants integrated a deeper understanding of the nature of family violence and developed their abilities to think systemically.

## Professional Development

*I learnt about leaders being bold.*
*I have begun to move towards men. I don't say no to working with them anymore.*
*I learnt to go to the dark places.*
*I learnt about forming a relationship with each person in the group.*
*I saw the facilitator work in action and shift away from the interminable check in. The group was leader facilitated and not leader dominated.*
*We need to develop more fine tuning (as group workers) and to be alert to the changes in someone . . . not just focus on the dysfunctional.*
*I learnt to work with dual relationships and to not withdraw.*
*I'm learning to look at people without blame.*

Overall, the professionals developed more capacity to enter into relationship with the client group. The old labels, which produce separation, loosened and there was more noticing of the health in each person. Despite there being some dual relationships in the group, individuals stretched themselves to be personally

present whilst still holding a professional identity. Flexibility and creativity were mobilised without sacrificing professionalism or responsiveness. Linear thinking dictates that the perpetrator of family violence is at fault and must change. At one level this is correct in that we must each take responsibility for our actions. However, this negates the larger context in which people live and the multiple factors contributing to any situation. Practitioners learnt that when working with a systemic understanding, judgment is likely to drop away and a new tolerance for the complexity and subtlety of all situations develops.

The ability to facilitate group work is commonly underestimated and consequently group leaders are often inadequately trained. Anxious practitioners reach for the manual and adopt a false authority that in the end cuts across relationships and the warm up of the group. Their observation of leaders working with ease and vitality in this group created another possibility. They saw that it was possible to 'get with' whatever was emerging in the group without any need to fix or help and thus began to envisage such ability for themselves. The idea that we must help someone can frequently turn into a burden. We stop 'being' with the person and become focused on 'doing' something for them, often simply imposing our version of what is needed. But when we double the person we are already assisting. The practitioner who "learnt to go to the dark places" learnt both to be unafraid of doubling and paradoxically that doubling was all that was needed.

## Experiences of the Open Group

> *Though we were from different backgrounds everyone was the same.*
> *I wanted to support others so I put myself forward, a sense of we will do this together.*
> *I owed it to the group to be involved.*
> *I liked that there was no judgment.*
> *The form doesn't discriminate. It was inclusive and safe for everyone to be involved. The more experienced practitioners took risks as well.*
> *I couldn't trust people I didn't know. I feel safe with my own colour* (for this person especially the group felt unsafe).

Our intention was to encourage the participation of people from all walks of life, as it is clear that family violence does not discriminate. As people shared their stories, myths were broken and this reduced isolation. Group members thoughtfully took risks when sharing stories, a significant development given that this was an open group of both professional workers and clients. Everyone experienced some stretch, particularly practitioners who needed to be more thoughtful than other participants. Where there is a dual role it is critical the therapist stays clinically aware at all times. When this can be achieved, along with holding an authentic relational presence, the gifts are huge. It is a relief for the client to see the therapist as an ordinary member of the community, grappling with the complexity of families.

80

An outcome of maintaining an open mixed group was a collapse of the 'us and them' divide. Transference positions, the holding of fixed roles originating in the original social atom, were harder to maintain and this provided more opportunity for here and now relationships to develop. A positive regard for each group member was built. This continued outside the group when people encountered one another in everyday situations and took the time to say hello. A member of the client group was especially surprised when a social worker greeted her in the supermarket. Inclusion was modelled and worked to reduce the power disparity that frequently occurs when the professional is the authority in someone else's life. When envisaging the group as inclusive of all subgroups we noted that there were limited opportunities for people of such different demographics to meet on a level playing field. When we saw ex-prisoners having a cup of tea with psychologists and social workers at the close of sessions we knew that the way the world is ordered was beginning to change.

## Impacts for Māori and Tauiwi (Non-Māori)

> I didn't realise that this happened in Pakeha whānau (White families).
> This is deep. It really gets you to the heart of the matter.
> I can bring all of who I am here. It's safe.
> I could see that all the Māori were on one side and we were all on the other. I didn't like that so I shifted over.
> It warms my heart when I see my own people and Tauiwi finding common ground. That doesn't happen much.

There was a buzz in the air on the first night of the pilot programme and alertness especially evident when a group of Māori arrived. Tentatively they placed themselves in a tight group at the back of the room. They consisted of iwi (tribal) practitioners and whānau (family), both ngā tāne (men) and ngā wāhine (women) undertaking domestic violence programmes. Later, over a coffee, they noted the newness of moving into a Tauiwi (non-Māori) service and being able to identify with the themes of the group. One man expressed relief on hearing swearing during the sociodrama. He had known it as a child, thus at that moment the drama became real to him and he engaged in the session. Sociodrama and playback practitioners highly value the sacredness of a group of people, their customs and their stories. A range of Māori participated, from those steeped in Tikanga Māori (Māori custom and traditions) whose first language was Te Reo (the Māori language), to those on a journey of re-claiming their heritage. They brought to the sessions a typically Māori systemic overview of the world, a perspective where everything is inter-related. This was very much part of past cultural practices and continues to be taught by iwi (tribal) practitioners, kaumātua (male elders) and kuia (female elders).

## Perspectives on Playback Theatre

> *It was good to be a witness. I could see more. I didn't have to get up and do something.*
> *I got more from playback. It was more intimate. The release was amazing. I was walking free for a couple of days.*
> *It reminded me of where I have come from.*
> *I realise I only told half my story. I held back my part in it.*
> *A lot of stuff came up afterwards and I needed someone to talk to.*
> *For me it was laid back therapy.*
> *The actors were great. They got the actual ferocity right.*
> *Others' stories had a powerful impact on me.*

Playback theatre offers a mirror to the storyteller, highlighting layers of experience not always considered during the telling. Each story reveals universal themes that others link to. This can be an enlivening yet edgy experience for both the teller and the audience. In the sessions, we offered an opportunity for personal responses to the sociodramatic story that unfolded first. Thus, if a catharsis of integration had not emerged then, it would later occur during playback theatre. Group members experienced a great deal of satisfaction when the full expression of their feelings was taken up by the playback actors. The actors themselves were well trained and confident to access and express a depth of feeling. They had spent significant time in rehearsal, processing their personal stories and responses to family violence. Playback makes it possible for people to stay in the witness position. This assists with the development of a reflective mind, which for some is very different to old patterns of reactivity. When family violence occurs, everyone in the system typically experiences isolation. Some participants noted a reduction in isolation and a commensurate development of community.

## Perspectives on Sociodrama

> *It was more challenging. You are more involved.*
> *I enjoyed playing innocence. I played the middle brother instead of always being the eldest.*
> *I learnt there is a big system with more people involved than just the client.*
> *I warmed up easily. I surprised myself.*
> *It was like I was sitting there with my own family.*
> *I learnt that the mum was probably lonely.*

Sociodrama enabled the participants to clearly see the systemic nature of family violence, which led to a greater appreciation of the multiple factors at play in any given situation. The exploration of social and family dynamics at the typical level enabled full participation from group members, without fear of exposure. They entered enthusiastically into the sociodramas, creating typical scenarios

82

and adding important elements such as the family dog. Sometimes roles were enacted by groups, as when three participants took up the role of the abusing mother together. This offered multiple doubling and also addressed performance anxiety for a naïve auxiliary.

Participants took up both familiar and unfamiliar roles, indicating great willingness to stretch outside of comfort zones and experience the world of the other. When role reversal occurred throughout the system, a rich understanding from all perspectives emerged. This produced greater awareness and compassion and lessened judgment. Group members were frequently surprised by their involvement in the sessions. Despite initial caution, they easily warmed up and found themselves volunteering to take up roles. It was delightful to see those who usually think they have nothing to contribute making meaningful interventions. For example, during one sociodrama an audience member called out passionately to a participant playing a man who was hiding and feeling ashamed of his violent actions. With great feeling she said, "I can see you are not a bad man. I will stand with you". This was a moment of transformation.

## Conclusion

The Moving Forward Project's pilot programme used the mediums of sociodrama and playback theatre to address family violence. Despite challenges and difficulties, the gains were rich and often unexpected. The qualitative research undertaken at the close of the six sessions highlighted a range of benefits, one of the most important being participants' deepening appreciation of the subtleties, complexities and systemic nature of family violence. Participants learnt that all relationships hold a potential for violence, whether this be overriding another's opinion or physical assault as an outlet for anger and frustration.

It is unusual for clients, professionals and others involved in this area to work collectively on a level playing field. Thus, the bringing together of the subgroups was another significant achievement in and of itself. Trusting relationships were developed with key participants in each subgroup so that they could confidently promote the project to their people. Barriers softened between subgroups as each developed the capacity to see beyond prejudice and first impressions. The ability to stand in one another's shoes matured and with that, came respect.

The project continues and has attracted funding from the Dunedin Collaboration against Family Violence and the Dunedin City Council. The Moving Forward Project won the 2011 Sonja Davies Peace Award.

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84

# Thriving Under Fire

*Bringing Moreno into the Corporate Training World*

*John Faisandier*

*Abstract*

John Faisandier describes his adaptation and use of psychodramatic principles and practices in the corporate training world. The TUF: Thriving Under Fire® programme uses action sociometry, systems analysis, role training and doubling to assist corporate staff to maintain positive relationships when facing angry and abusive customers in the heat of the moment. The author also reflects on the development of the training programme and business that he has built on Morenian principles.

> *"We aren't going to do role play I hope!"* Jeanette bustled into the room and took her place with the other 11 city librarians about to begin the TUF: Thriving Under Fire programme.
>     *"Of course not!" I replied. "There will be lots of action though. That's why there aren't any tables in the room".*
>
>     *And so begins a typical TUF: Thriving Under Fire workshop.*

## Introduction

I have always worked with people, firstly as a volunteer teacher in Tonga in my first year

out of school. Then, following eight years in the seminary I spent 11 years in teaching, parish work and university chaplaincy as a Catholic priest. After leaving the priesthood in 1989 I worked in the Race Relations Office in Christchurch and for four years in drug and alcohol rehabilitation work at Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer Springs.

Beginning in 1984 I trained in the psychodrama method and was certificated as a psychodramatist ten years later. As I used Moreno's action methods I noticed how enlivening they were for individuals and groups. When I set up my own business in 1998 I naturally brought these methods into my work in the corporate sector. After moving to Wellington in 1999, I continued to develop my ability to work with business groups in team building, strategic planning, trouble shooting and just about anything else corporations wanted me to do.

The TUF: Thriving Under Fire programme was originally developed in 1999 for bank tellers who were hassled and abused by angry customers. It was one of a number of organisational development and training activities I devised. After several years I realised that offering such a variety of programmes was unsustainable. Marketing became complicated and every new job required a completely fresh warm up and the creation of new plans and resources. I was often up until 2am printing off booklets and handouts for a training session the next day.

I had heard a lot about niche marketing and in a defining moment in October 2005 I realised that the smart thing to do was to create my niche with the TUF programme. I decided to make this one programme my brand and become the recognised expert in this area of training. I set out to read and write extensively on the topic, present at trade conferences, develop a website, get media exposure and become known in the corporate world as the authority on dealing with emotions in the workplace. It felt risky at first because I knew it would take time and effort to get established as the market leader in training people to deal with angry and aggressive customers. It meant that I would have to turn down other work that might come my way.

In the five years since making that decision TUF has become well known. I have developed its branding and marketing. I have had the programme reviewed several times by entering and winning awards within the training industry. I have delivered lectures at university and had groups of students critique the programme. I have delivered workshops to hundreds of people in many different industries and occupations throughout New Zealand. The experience I have gained has increased my knowledge of the resources people need when facing difficult clients. The programme has been expanded to include a pre-workshop e-learning module, two half day workshops, twelve monthly follow-up reminder lessons and twelve months support through email and blog communication. I have written the book 'Thriving Under Fire: Turn Difficult Customers into Business Success', which outlines the programme in detail.

As well as the original TUF for Frontline Staff, the programme now includes TUF for Managers and TUF for Teams. This means that all members of an organisation are catered for. In 2009 the TUF Licensing Plan was launched. Large organisations can now buy a license and have their own facilitators trained to run the programme for large numbers of people at a cost effective rate. As well, exporting opportunities are being explored.

95

# Psychodramatic Principles and Practices

The TUF programme is based on psychodramatic principles and practices. The framework of warm-up, action and sharing is fundamental to the work. There is emphasis on the integration of thinking, feeling and acting and the development of roles. And group work is at its heart. In what follows six key areas of the TUF programme are described and discussed, with emphasis on the psychodramatic principles and practices that are integrated into each area.

## Beginning the Group

Over the years I have noticed the many people who turn up to corporate training events without a warm up to connecting meaningfully with others. Most expect to state their name and where they are from and that will be about it. Sociometry is thus the first principle that I apply in the TUF programme. I know that strong connections between participants are prerequisites for success in the interactive group sessions that follow. The first activity is therefore aimed at engaging group members in an active exploration of the sociometric connections between them. The participants share, in action, the organisational areas in which they work, the duration of their time there, their experiences of confronting angry and upset customers and their perceptions of their abilities to deal effectively with them. Sometimes countries of origin or associations that participants have through birth, migration or marriage are included in the sociometric mapping activities. These can be an excellent way of sharing experiences and valuing cultural diversity, and all add to the building of a productive working group.

## Working from Strength

The TUF programme values and builds on learners' previous knowledge and past successes, an important principle of adult education. Using Play of Life[1] figures and objects, participants are invited to recreate past scenes where they have been confronted by difficult customers and have resolved the conflicts through their own efforts. They concretise three qualities that assisted them to reach that resolution and further concretise four people from their lives who have helped them to develop those qualities. On completion, participants share their sculpture and its significance with a neighbour. The effect is to increase the confidence and positivity participants feel towards their own abilities, towards their fellow group members, and towards the training that they are about to undertake. A good warm up is underway which strengthens the likelihood of success in the coming activities.

## Diamond of Opposites

When they attend TUF sessions, many people from the corporate sector simply want a 'quick fix' for the angry customer conundrum. The first task, therefore, is to develop an appreciation of the complexity of human interactions. The Diamond of Opposites model, first developed in Chicago by Linnea Carlson-Sabelli and her husband Hector and popularised in this part of the world by Ann Hale, successfully lends itself to this purpose. Participants score themselves on a series of criteria: the tension experienced in

attending the TUF training day which includes the pull to attend and the pull not to attend; the inner conflict involved in dealing with a difficult customer which involves the pull to stay and serve and the pull to walk away. This paper-based activity assists participants to become more conscious of contradictory pressures in many situations. In the sharing phase, group members come to appreciate more deeply the many inner conflicts that they experience throughout a normal working day and the way in which these opposite forces affect their thinking, feeling and behaviour.

## Systems Analysis

Continuing the theme of complexity in human interactions, we use a static sociodramatic presentation to explore the system of an angry customer. Group members warm up to a typical difficult person with whom they come into contact in their work, and then contribute to building a kind of sociodramatic profile. The Play of Life figures and other objects are used to represent different aspects of that person's life. We concretise family, social, educational, medical, financial and historical circumstances, and include what participants often call 'the person's baggage' carried from childhood, school and adult life. The systems analysis of the representative difficult client also includes episodes when the person has interacted with the participants' organisations. This exploration is often a significant time in the group, the moment when experiential learning comes into its own. The participants reverse roles with their customers for the first time and realise that customers have problems and worries much greater than they ever realised.



*An example of a static sociodramatic presentation exploring the system of a typical difficult customer using Play of Life figures and objects.*

One city council group was exploring the system of a 38 year old Samoan woman with whom they had difficulties. They set out the system, her five children, her parents who lived with her, her absent husband, the medical conditions she suffered, the difficulties she experienced at her children's schools and with social welfare, the police and other authorities. They looked into the church to which she belonged including the support she received and the obligations she had to fulfil there, her own schooling, the cross cultural conflicts she encountered every day, her lack of money, the night time cleaning job she undertook in the city and many other elements. A group member, Daphne wiped the tears from her eyes and said "I will never look at this woman the same again. I have been so narrow in my thinking and feel guilty that I have been mean towards her. No wonder she is so pushy when she deals with us". Others were deeply moved and echoed Daphne's sentiments. This part of the programme might be called empathy training.

## Doubling

While participants are developing empathy towards the typical customer, they also struggle with what to say. "But how do you respond to them when they are so angry and abusive?"

I introduce them to a simple form of doubling. I explain the Action Perception Emotion (APE) principle. When customers are upset and complain, their presenting behaviour includes an action, a perception and an emotion.

Action        My delivery is late.
Perception    You have caused this lateness.
Emotion       Annoyance, distress, frustration, anger.

Faced with this situation people immediately warm up either to the role of *Ms. or Mr. Fix-It* and attend to the action first, or they want to justify themselves and try to correct the client's perception. However, the most effective thing to do is to acknowledge and respond to the emotion because that is the most prominent aspect of the angry client's experience right now in the moment. Saying sorry can be the first acknowledgement that the other person has been upset by what has happened. Then one might say "This really has been terrible for you" or "You have been inconvenienced by this" or "That's certainly enough to make you angry". These are simple acts of doubling.

There is often resistance to this idea. Some participants will say "This won't work with the people I have to deal with and anyway it sounds patronising". This then is an opportunity for me to model what I am teaching. Rather than trying to convince them, I double them! "You really don't want to sound patronising do you and you want something that will work with the kind of people you have to deal with". "Exactly! It'll never work where I am". Participants may not realise that I have doubled them, but they do change as a result. They are more open to attempting a doubling statement themselves, and I coach them to do so naturally using their own unique expressions.

## Role Training

I use role training so that participants can practice making a natural doubling response to customers who are angry and upset. The form I use removes the embarrassment often experienced when role plays are enacted by two people in front of the whole group.

First we make a list of challenging statements that difficult customers actually say such as:

You don't know anything.
I'm a tax payer. I pay your wages.
I can't afford to pay that fine.
I want to speak to a man/woman/manager.
Doesn't anyone do any work around this place?
This place is no use to anyone.

Next we generate the underlying feelings being expressed through these statements:

Frustrated
Annoyed
Worried
Anxious
Pissed off
Desperate

Group members often contribute words that describe personality characteristics. These are recorded in a third list:

Domineering
Stupid
Aggressive
Arrogant
Self-righteous

I repeat aloud words from the second and third lists so that participants can experience the different impacts. They get the point that words that reflect feelings are much more likely to build a positive relationship than the judgemental and critical words from the third list. There is further modelling of possible helpful responses.

The participants are then organised into pairs, A and B. A is the customer making typical statements as strongly as possible to B, the staffer. B practises responding to the emotion first with a doubling statement. A comes back at B with an even stronger response and B is encouraged to continue doubling. A and B then reverse roles. This activity is repeated in different pairs two or three times, with pauses for reflection. Much essential learning takes place during this activity. Participants become acutely aware of the difficulty of responding to people when they are highly emotional, even when they have a template of what to say. They realise the importance of taking one's time before responding, responding not reacting, not taking it personally, being genuine,

99

keeping responses short. They also realise that a few customers will be habitually negative no matter how one responds to them.

To lighten up proceedings, I sometimes initiate a round of 'politically incorrect' responses. Participants can say whatever they like. This activity certainly increases the spontaneity and laughter in the group. It also assists the learning because it confirms the poverty of an ineffective response. These activities are always followed by sharing, processing and activity book work.

## Developing a Programme

The TUF: Thriving Under Fire programme is a practical application of the psychodrama method in the corporate training situation and I am proud of it. In a larger sense it demonstrates how psychodramatists can use Moreno's theory and techniques to develop programmes in all kinds of fields and on many different topics. The process does require reflection, steady practice and refinement. It is probably best to begin simply with small refinements to existing programmes, and then gradually build up competence and confidence to develop a stand alone programme. Regular supervision with psychodrama peers and close collaboration with colleagues is essential.

## Building a Business

As for building a business, and branding, marketing and selling the training, I suggest getting alongside and gaining help from other professionals in organisations such as the New Zealand Association of Training and Development (NZATD) and the National Speaker's Association of New Zealand or the Australian equivalents. I also recommend a business mentor. People associated with these organisations taught me specific skills to operate well in the business world, and also to trust that what I had to offer was worthwhile.

## Conclusion

Moreno's action methods create experiential learning. They provide participants with a unique experience unmatched by any other training that they do. TUF: Thriving Under Fire enlivens people. It challenges them. It reaffirms their goodness and their ability to make positive relationships with all sorts of people, including the difficult customers that they encounter in the corporate world.

It is ironic that as TUF expands, I find I have less time for the kind of involvement I have had in the past with the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA). I am, however, satisfied that I am fulfilling one of ANZPA's aims in taking Morenian principles into the world so that people everywhere may experience increased spontaneity and creativity in their relationships and in their lives.

END NOTES

1. Play of Life ® is a methodology developed by Dr. Carlos Raimundo. It uses small toy figures and objects to set out people and the relationships that connect them. We use play mobile toys and other simple objects such as coloured stones, ice block sticks and pipe cleaners to represent the relational system. Dr. Raimundo sometimes refers to this at 'petit psychodrama'.

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