Sociodramatic principles and big data in organisational change

Warren Parry talks to Rollo Browne

Warren recently published *Big Change Best Path*, a book on his work on leading organisational change. In this interview, he discusses change, his research, the links to sociodrama and psychodrama and the principles that underlie his practice. Warren was centrally involved in psychodrama from 1976 and pioneered the development of sociodrama becoming a TEP in Sociodrama in 1986. Warren subsequently set up his own consulting business, and developed ChangeTracking to assist leaders to implement change programs successfully. In 2013, ChangeTracking joined Accenture who have since used the proprietary method in large scale change initiatives. *Big Change Best Path* was published by Kogan Page in 2015.
Rollo: From sociodrama to organisational consulting you’ve been involved in understanding change all of your professional life. When did you realise that you needed to use data in order to significantly increase your impact?

Warren: It connects back to doing psychodrama or a sociodrama. You start with a system, intrapsychic, a social system, a family system, and you spatially set it out on the floor. Then you move through different points of view so that the person or the group can experience different perspectives and make sense of it.

I did leadership training using experiential methods for a number of years. And in a way it was a corporate extension of doing sociodramatic type work, group work, leadership development. But I became increasingly aware that measuring was a way of putting data on the table and feeding it back to the executive. So in a way I think of ChangeTracking as like doing a big sociodrama. In the sociodrama world, I developed a number of ways of people concretising events, like you might freeze the system and say “show with your hands how much fear there is” or “show how much trust there is” and then you quickly walk around and say, “well trust in this stakeholder is solid, trust over here is weak.” That’s interesting as we get to know the system. So you’re walking around making insights and then you start the system again. So in a way, ChangeTracking is just a logical extension of exactly all of those principles but you’re using people to complete a survey and then comparing the results against a database and norms.

Rollo: Reading your book I began thinking that when I’m in a room and a system gets set out, it’s a form of a mirror. And we all have an experience and the people in the room are all affected by it. Data is no different. It’s a mirror of a different kind. I was imagining that the power of data is that it creates a more permanent form of mirror so that executives couldn’t discount it in some way.

Warren: One time we were working in Europe in a manufacturing company that was taken over and the CEO was replaced with this very tough German leader. He inherited the ChangeTracking survey that we had just done. I went to Helsinki and presented the results to him the day before we were to meet the executive. He just listened, didn’t say much. I thought ‘are we ever going to get through to this person.’ The next day after the presentation to the executive he stood up and he said to his team, “this soft stuff is really hard” and went into this 45 minute
monologue. “See I told you there was this problem in the production area” and he pointed to the graph looking through the French groups. “And over here in Germany I’ve been telling you there’s an issue at this level.” What was interesting is that data mirrored his perception. It’s one thing for a CEO to say, “I think this is going on with the middle management in France,” but when that same issue comes from people in the organisation it’s much more powerful.

The other point is that we deliberately subtitled the book *Organisational Change with Wisdom, Analytics and Insights*. The key thing with the database in ChangeTracking is it’s real people undergoing real change. It’s not just a matter of collecting data, but more importantly, building good maps for people to use and navigate change by. You need to ask all kinds of people in all kinds of stages, the early stages of change, the middle, some who have trust problems in their relationships, some people who get lost. The best map comes when you have multiple people and now we’ve got over a million people in the database. I like to think of it as distilling the wisdom of the travellers. So when you have 30 people in a sociodrama, you as a director sum up the wisdom of the group and their insights. With a million people in the database you still get generalisable insights and that’s one of the main aims I had for the book.

The other thing we found is that when people answer a ChangeTracking questionnaire they’re telling you exactly down to the millimetre what you need to do to be successful if you listen. This is the same skill required of a psychodrama director. So our task in ChangeTracking has been to translate that data into meaning and present it back to the executive. So it’s the mirroring process that you describe.

**Rollo:** So, people are telling you how to be successful if you listen carefully enough. That sounds like a Morenian principle to me. The participant or the protagonist actually knows what’s needed even if they can’t quite do it.

**Warren:** Exactly. There’s two elements in a psychodrama or sociodrama. When the participants start a psychodrama, they know some things and they don’t know other things. But maximise, concretise and follow the process then knowing becomes clarified. It’s no different in ChangeTracking. We do a warm-up because people have to agree to do a survey and the executive has to agree to be willing to get feedback. We then take that data and crystallise it into a 3 dimensional map and use that map to talk to the executive. In the process, like in psychodrama, we bring insights and they ask questions and then we further interrogate the
data to find answers to their questions. We’re using sophisticated analytics to move from the perception to the insights.

**Rollo:** So here’s the picture I’m making. You’ve got an organisation – let’s say it’s 3,000 people – and you get the surveys filled out and you’ve got sub-groups, typically teams, that are conceptually on the stage. And those sub-groups have particular characteristics. They’re not all the same.

**Warren:** There’s two things to clarify for the readers. When we get the data, we don’t give feedback for a group of less than 6 people. But a team of 6 or more get their report. Then inside the business unit, that leader gets a report of his or her teams. Then inside of a company, the person can see all the units. The CEO can see across multiple countries. It’s hierarchy, and we look through levels in the organisation, across functions and across geographies. So again it follow systems thinking. All of ChangeTracking is based on systemic thinking, so it’s no different than setting out a sociodrama. You say, in this family with a drug and alcohol problem, this is what’s going on. In the drug and alcohol social system that they’re attending, the husband’s attending treatment, this is what’s going on. For the government, this is the cumulative problem of drug and alcohol across Australia. So you’re moving to analyse it at different levels.

**Rollo:** What happens in a sociodrama is that we typically want people in each position to have the subjective experience of the other viewpoints. So there’s a lot of role reversal. And this is different to how you’ve applied it in ChangeTracking.

**Warren:** Yes, we can’t physically role reverse when tracking change across an organisation, but having said that, we do use those principles. We did ChangeTracking in a large police unit in the UK and we were giving feedback to the top 12 executives including the Commissioner. What was interesting is we said, “Ok, you’ve got 3,000 people in your workforce of 10,000 filling this out” and instead of just saying, “Here’s the survey results,” we said, “Here is 750 hours worth of your people giving feedback at various levels.” In this case we’d printed out a composite profile of employees at different levels, for example, Henry Smith, a constable or a female detective sergeant. We had a photo for each and we handed around sheets of paper. We gave one to each executive and said, “Read that out, stand in their shoes.” So each one of the 10 or 12 executives read out script that we’d prepared.
We made it real. So the interesting thing is even before we got into the results, they’d had a photo and an experience because when the person read out this person’s profile, we said, “What do you think it would be like for you being a senior constable in the middle of this culture change?” That warmed them up as an executive to multiple points of view. We were physically limited because they were sitting around a table. I was on a video-link. So we couldn’t do what we do in psychodrama or sociodrama. But the principles applied and they got pretty tough feedback. But as a consequence of the warm-up, they embraced the results and despite that pretty tough feedback, they maintained their spontaneity, they maintained their creativity. So I took them deeply into the results. And then said, “Look, with this kind of feedback, it’s normal to get overwhelmed, feel there’s nothing you can do, even feel depressed.”

**Rollo**: That happens in a sociodrama.

**Warren**: That’s right. You don’t try to intervene in the early stages. You deepen the experience to crystallise the issues clearly and see the dynamics involved.

**Rollo**: Which includes feeling depressed.

**Warren**: Yes. So I didn’t try to take it away from them. I said, “Look, in this situation you have to actually start by recognising the small signs of what’s working well and start to build on those.” So then we built up again. If you think of the 2 hour session, it was almost in sociodramatic terms a classical sociodrama, which I find fun. It’s just that you’re doing it virtually, you’re doing it in a global scale and you’re applying Moreno’s principles, but you’re not all in one room. You’re using data and analytics as the reflective feedback mechanism.

**Rollo**: I love that idea of you getting them to read out a composite picture of a constable or a junior detective or something, so that they enter into the experience and at that point they have a different feeling. It’s not just data because they’ve entered a story.

**Warren**: It’s not just data and it’s not just seeing the world from their own particular role. They’re doing what Moreno taught which is that true power comes from seeing multiple perspectives. Like in a role reversal.

**Rollo**: You must experience the system from as many useful points as you can and then come to see what else emerges at that point.

**Warren**: Yes.
**Rollo:** Ok. Now we should probably say more about the navigation system you have built. Firstly, there are 44 questions that everybody fills out. You could have asked a thousand questions, why would so few questions give you such a readout on a fundamentally unique thing as a change process. There would be millions of variations in change.

**Warren:** So the thing that’s important to understand when we built ChangeTracking is there’s three pieces to the navigation system. There’s a model which as you say is contained in the questions. There’s a map, which I’ll come back to, and then there’s pathways which contains the predictive aspects of the system.

If we just focus on the model, we asked well over 3,000 questions to refine down to the 44 that were essential. So a fundamental assumption we made in building ChangeTracking was to let the data do the talking meaning in the beginning we made up all the questions that we could think of. We collected data. We did factor analysis to find the true structure of the data. Then we eliminated overlapping questions and we kept searching for the fundamental DNA. So the final 44 questions actually crystallise that knowledge.

**Rollo:** The fundamental DNA of how to be successful in change?

**Warren:** Yes. So we developed a model on what it takes to be successful.

**Rollo:** That’s a big question isn’t it?

**Warren:** Yeah, but again, the interesting thing is to let the data do the talking. We structured the questionnaire and it evolved in iterations because clients would say, “yes, but what I really want to know is whether courage is a big factor in getting improvement. Should I push harder?” So we’d test these assumptions. The interesting thing as a researcher is this approach challenges your mental maps and models because everybody has their own mental map and from that claims ‘this is how change works.’ When you start exploring the data sometimes you see things that are intuitive, sometimes you see things that are counter-intuitive. In the front of the book are the 12 myths of change and they challenge assumptions that most of the current change approaches are based on.

**Rollo:** This is interesting to me because I sometimes say that the process of sociodrama and psychodrama is that we’re training people’s intuition in order to be able to put their finger on what will most progress the drama at that moment.
**Warren:** Yes. It is both intuition and accumulated knowledge.

**Rollo:** So you would have developed all that in your life as a sociodramatist, and now you’re saying that intuition is not enough or you actually want to challenge your intuition.

**Warren:** Intuition is a funny thing because there’s pure intuition and there’s the evolution of your own mental map and model. An experienced change practitioner, for example, might have managed at most 10 or so large change processes. By definition their mental map and model of change is based on their experience. But if you then have 300-500 change programs you can access, then you can expand your mental maps and models. Just like in the training of a director, there’s blind spots. People see some things, they don’t see other things. These patterns appear repeatedly when you supervise trainees. They may have a construct that management is “bad” and the worker is a “poor person” that needs to be saved, so they come up with interventions biased by their own mental maps and models. Personally I found the process of doing ChangeTracking fascinating because we were challenged to test our own mental maps and models against the collective wisdom of over 1 million people in the database.

To give an example, people are typically disturbed in an organisation undergoing change. Yes, there’s fear but what is the problem? The leaders say, “We’re restructuring, we’re reorganising.” So, first there is denial that fear is an issue. If you make it past this and leaders see the need to lower fear, what is their standard approach to reducing fear? It’s to lift communication. The assumption is that as we communicate more fear will go down. The interesting thing when we look at the data is there’s no evidence across hundreds of thousands of people that that actually happens. The data shows that as there’s more communication whether it’s face to face or written, fear actually goes up, it doesn’t go down. In that sense their intervention to lower fear is based on flawed assumptions.

**Rollo:** In the Morenian canon, it would essentially be that a person who is fearful would need someone alongside them and therefore the communication would be an aspect of that. But in a group it’s a different thing.

**Warren:** That’s right. So the more information that people get actually makes them more fearful. It’s only through discussion in a trusted relationship whether that’s in the workplace or outside the workplace that people talking through issues helps to lower fear.
**Rollo:** Okay. That’s an example of a blind spot in the mental model of change.

**Warren:** If somebody in an organisation is just simply relying on communication as their major strategy for managing fear, they’ve missed the point, which is to take this one step further and link to business outcomes. If we plot benefits realisation against the level of fear, we find there’s a correlation. It’s normal that as fear and frustration go up, at the same time benefits realisation drops by 20-25%. If you’re doing a large implementation, there’s a lot of money at stake through not managing fear. And if you ask people what’s their strategy to manage fear, they’ll just tell you either there’s no strategy or it’s communication. This is where we use the data and help them to find more effective interventions that actually deliver outcomes.

Going back to our model, there’s a series of drivers that we identify – vision and direction, communication, the impact of leadership at corporate, business unit and team levels, the resources that a team has – systems and process as well as skills and staffing levels, the level of accountability people have and the positive and negative feelings in the team. All of these are important so that set of questions gives you like an x-ray scan across the body.

**Rollo:** So that’s the model. The data can be gathered to see what the pattern is for a particular sub-unit or for the whole organisation. Is that where the map comes in?

**Warren:** Yes. Firstly, why do you have a map? There’s a wonderful quote from Jerry Brotton who wrote “The history of the world in 12 maps.” He said, “Where would you be without good maps? Lost of course.” So the problem in having 44 questions is that as you look through the results of each question, you have to figure out what the patterns are. A good map synthesises those complex patterns for you.

So a person might identify that: vision is high, but trust in executives is low, they don’t have the resources needed, customer service is declining and their manager is difficult but actually they really like the people in their team. What does all that mean? You have to move from individual responses to the larger dynamic. When you do this in a sociodrama the director synthesises the pattern and gives voice to it. He or she says, “I see this behaviour, this person saying this, they’re in this part of the system.” So he or she, as the director, sums up the pattern. Family therapists name patterns. Psychologists name patterns. There’s all kind of
professionals naming patterns. The challenge in moving to pattern recognition is first to show the patterns and second to make it visual.

There’s a really good Zen story that I like that sums up the map. This samurai walks into this Buddhist temple and says to this little tiny priest, “Teach me the difference between heaven and hell.” The little monk looks up to him and says, “You’re dirty, you’re smelly, you’re uncouth, your breath stinks, you’re as stupid as a cow, why would I even begin to think about teaching you the difference between heaven and hell?” And of course the samurai goes into a rage, takes out a sword and is about to bring it down on the head of the monk. The monk looks him straight in the eyes and says, “This is hell.” The samurai has the instant recognition that actually the monk has risked his life to show him the difference between heaven and hell and he becomes overwhelmed with love and compassion and the monk looks at him and says, “This is heaven.” The point being, and this is how the map is built in our database, we have the good, the very good, the bad, and the ugly. If you’re to build a useful map of the dynamic of change, you have to have at one pole, heaven, which is where people are trying to get to. This is the top of the map. You also have to have the worse possible scenarios which are hell, that is at the bottom of the map. So in the book, Chapter 3 is all about what does it mean to get to the top. Chapter 4 is about what is it like at the very bottom. And generally life’s not like either of those poles; it’s all the greys in the middle. So the rest of the book walks through how do you move from the very bottom back up to the top. This is how we have built maps in ChangeTracking using the experiences of travellers.

The second thing is, in order to build a map from data collected around emotions, relationships, feelings, it’s non-linear. This means you can’t use linear statistics because it flattens it and does not give a true picture of the real situation.

**Rollo:** I see. So you’re not averaging data.

**Warren:** You’ve got to use different statistical methods. When we built the map we were working with the CSIRO, the government science group in Australia, with the people in the exploration mining field, and we noticed that they were using self-organising maps, SOMs. It’s pattern recognition. It takes our data and it organises it on a three dimensional map. We took 2 or 3 years of experimenting to find how do you make a really useful map. The current map we use involved 33 billion calculations to create recognisable patterns. The SOM works on the principle, remarkably similar to psychodrama and sociodrama, of putting likeminded people together and unlike people far apart. We built the
original map on 53,000 people. Imagine 53,000 people standing on a big football field, I mean, you don’t get 53,000 people in a room. You might get 100, you might get 50 but you don’t get 53,000. In sociodrama, you might set out a social system and say, “Put all the people that you trust close to you and put all the people that you mistrust far away.” What I find fascinating is that’s what the SOM is doing mathematically using 33 billion calculations and it’s doing it in a way that no human being can.

**Rollo:** You can see the patterns across that many people?.

**Warren:** Yes. In a technical sense, the map has 625 cells, each with its own mix of response to the 44 questions. We found that there were over 20 distinct dynamics between very low and very high performance. These are patterns that you can’t know as an individual, even an enlightened being can’t do that. The cool thing, and what I think is really applicable to psychodrama and sociodrama, is that it’s pattern recognition at a scale that the individual cannot comprehend. But we do understand once the patterns are identified. Building the map was the second step in our journey to create a navigation system.

**Rollo:** You can’t have that many relationships yourself. That’s the limit of group life.

**Warren:** I think they say in the Army you can know 90-120 people’s names. There’s a certain size where group members can still know each other. Gortex, for example, designs its factories so that when they reach that number of people they build a new factory.

**Rollo:** 150 is the Dunbar number which is the size of primate communities before they split to form another group.

**Warren:** The point that I think is interesting for sociodramatists and psychodramatists is the map is non-linear but there are tipping points. On a certain position on the map, you have a dynamic that is the effect of a certain combination of factors. As you start to change, you hit a tipping point, where a small shift in one of the dimensions suddenly tips you into a new dynamic. So you shift your position on the map. Change is not linear.

**Rollo:** That relates to a Morenian concept of the individual as having a whole lot of roles and role clusters and that the change in one central or one aspect of a role affects a whole lot of other roles.

**Warren:** You could be developing the roles incrementally and then a tipping point occurs. So you then integrate the gestalt. Perhaps in a
catharsis of integration or a catharsis of abreaction, where there’s an 
outpouring of feeling and after that it feels different and anger is not 
needed.

**Rollo:** Then something else can emerge. Can you follow what happens 
across time?

**Warren:** That’s where, if you think of a digital world, we’re doing 
sociodrama digitally. When I’m talking to the executive, you’ve got their 
2,000 people present in the room. You’ve got the database and the 
executive interacts with that knowledge. And that’s cool because then it’s 
real. So what I try to say people is, “Don’t just view this as data and 
numbers, see this is real people trying to tell you what their experience 
is.” And they can listen or not.

Often what happens in ChangeTracking, in the first survey cycle they 
say, “Oh, these and these are the issues.” They then implement some 
decisions and you may see some movement, perhaps. Then again, like in 
psychodrama, the first psychodrama you do you don’t get to the core 
issues. In the second cycle they say, “Well we did this” but then you start 
to say, “Actually the underlying systemic issue is a lack of accountability 
or perhaps a lack of trust or a lack of transparency.” So you move from 
more superficial to deeper issues.

This brings in the third element in our system – the predictive 
dynamics – what I call the pathways. As we measure and track groups, 
you can see the movements on the map. These follow predictable 
patterns depending on the decisions made.

**Rollo:** The move from superficial to deeper issues is shown in the 
Hollander curve of a psychodrama enactment as the protagonist 
progressively gets closer to the heart of the matter. Is there a link between 
role theory and systems theory in what you’re doing?

**Warren:** There is but it’s not been made explicit. ChangeTracking 
consists primarily of targeted questions about the organisation. 
Individuals answer them but our primary focus is not the individual. It’s 
the team that is the primary unit of performance. But in LifeMapping, 
which I’m working on now, the individual is the primary unit and that’s 
where I think role theory will start to kick in. That’s the next project.

**Rollo:** Let’s wind back a bit to a more philosophical question. What 
was it that interested you more about group behaviour rather individual?

**Warren:** I don’t remember making a conscious choice about that but I 
do remember following where was the most creativity and then asking
how do I get resources to explore that. I guess the group dynamics intrigued and fascinated me. Entering the business world there was creativity and funding. But if you look at the origins, psychodrama was unbelievably pioneering in its day. I don’t use the terms psychodrama or sociodrama in the book, but everything I do has come from spontaneity theory, Moreno’s work. I think Moreno was incredibly advanced for his time. Now in the business world they talk about focusing on your strengths, not on your psychopathology. Moreno said, “I look at the individual from the top down. Freud looks at the individual from the bottom up, first you see the genitals and then you see the head. I see the head, the heart and the spontaneity as the primary drivers.” So he was already advanced on strength-based leadership which is now fashionable.

**Rollo:** Let’s go back to basics. What would you say sociodrama is and what it’s designed to do? And let’s see if that’s still relevant.

**Warren:** Sociodrama, for me, is essentially exploring the relationships between the individual and the social or group systems that they interface with. It’s not that the individual isn’t included in that at the deepest level. He or she is, but the focus is primarily on the individual’s relationship with the core groups and the collective psyche.

**Rollo:** And the purpose?

**Warren:** The purpose is to gain a systemic view, multiple perceptions. That’s also the purpose in psychodrama but the intention is different. There’s the individual but as we know group dynamics dominate the individual. You’re dealing with degrees of complexity. Some people just want everything black and white. Some people can handle multiple points of view, serious amounts of ambiguity and find their way through a complex system. I would see sociodrama as taking people along that path and, again, if you go back to the heaven and hell analogy, you become most competent, most smart, and most benefit to society when you can role reverse with heaven and you can also role reverse with hell and you can understand the differences between the two.

**Rollo:** Psychodrama’s never quite made it into the fabric of society except in some niche forms. I think it’s logistically difficult to get more than 50 people in a room – people come and they want to be told something – but to actually get co-explorers is a huge challenge. You can work it in smaller groups when you’ve warmed them up to something
but actually as a methodology it can’t keep expanding beyond a certain size.

Warren: Yes, to me, the fundamental thing Moreno said is that the group causes the individual to have problems. You grow up in a family, with a certain dynamic and this has an imprint on the individual. So his fundamental proposition was you need the group to heal the individual.

Rollo: That’s it.

Warren: And I think it’s no different in organisations. I mean, we’re not dealing with the individual in their life as such, although you could get into work-life balance or issues of wellbeing which go beyond the organisation. So in that sense, it would be constrained to what’s legitimate inside the organisation. But I think you take something like organisational culture; how do you even begin to get your head around the culture? Like you’re saying you get 50 people in the room and if they are senior managers or a representative sample, you might get some picture of the culture but it’s amorphous. In the business world, they talk about engagement or use other constructs as a way of trying to get this co-exploration and co-collaboration but it’s limited. What I’d say we’ve done is we’ve got a social system operating, we’re collecting perceptions from the social system, we’re using analytics and visual representation to synthesize complex stuff and present it back. But it is still exactly the same principle of action and reflection. Where sociodrama perhaps becomes limited is it’s an incredibly sophisticated technology. It takes a lot to learn to direct it and to get 50 people or 20 people in a room committed to exploration is hard work.

I don’t think Moreno has actually been given enough recognition for this kind of fundamental leadership and thinking. I think we have to separate out the underlying principles from the form of sociodrama and not mix them. When that happens it’s possibly been to the detriment of the method because it’s locked into the form. For example, sociodrama has to be done a certain way. I guess if there’s a message I would like to send to the psychodrama and sociodrama community is you don’t have to be constrained by the method, the physical method. It’s the principles that are universal and unbelievably central and if you deeply understand those, they can be expressed in multiple forms.

Rollo: An example of a principle would be that people gain a systemic consciousness when they set out a system and they experience it being mirrored to them.

Warren: Absolutely. So again, there’s action-reflection and creating.
**Rollo:** Well, action-reflection by itself isn’t quite enough to create change.

**Warren:** No. The thing that I’m coming to is that for a sociodrama to work the director has to create between the people a certain kind of relationship that allows people to reflect on their experience and then create.

**Rollo:** Yes.

**Warren:** I guess a psychotherapist does it and a social worker does it but there’s certain conditions that have to exist in the relationships to allow people’s reflective capacity to kick in and instead of them becoming constrained, their imagination expands. And that’s what would be aimed for in psychodrama and sociodrama and that’s a universal principle.

**Rollo:** And that’s still what you’re trying to do in the organisations, have them expand their imagination.

**Warren:** Yes, so even though you could be facing incredibly difficult situations and it might look like all the possibilities are restricted, as Moreno rightly said, “Nobody can restrict your imagination creativity.” Even facing death you still have creativity at your disposal. And I think that is even more applicable now than it ever was. How do you create in a group and a wider social structure that generative capacity to not change or limit people’s experience and how do you mirror back and how do you reflect on experience in order to make more sense.

**Rollo:** And how can you do that in a group so that you collectively connect rather than just individually all the time and are you committed to coming back to it after some period of time and saying ‘can we do better, is there more?’

**Warren:** Exactly. If you can’t manage that at a team level and create norms that enable participation, enable people to reflect on their behaviour in a safe manner, enable people to share and learn in this co-creative way, then you limit the potential of the group.

**Rollo:** That’s another principle.

**Warren:** Yes.

**Rollo:** So just to finish, do you think of yourself as having been a researcher all along?
Warren: No, no. The funny thing is I do research but I don’t think of myself as a researcher. I’ve done a psych degree and I deeply explored psychology but I don’t think of myself as a psychologist. So the conclusion I’ve come to more recently is my central identity is that of an artist. My first degree was in architecture and my second degree was in fine arts. Only then did I study psychology and psychodrama. So I create with what I have. I create with the research and I’m interested in creating with people.

Rollo: That’s the point.

Warren: Maybe to sum it up there’s a wonderful expression I heard in Asia which is – “He who understands love is not equal to he who loves. And he who loves is not equal to he who delights in loving.” I have seen few leaders who delight. If you think understanding is the first level, being is the second level – so that’s a bit like agreement to the vision is more important than understanding. But the third level is delighting in being. That’s kind of what I aspire to, meaning there’s some leaders who at that third level create with whatever comes their way. So if they have to make a business with rubber tyres, they make a business with rubber tyres. If they have to make a business with banks and money, then they make a business with banks and money. If a depression comes or a financial crisis comes, it’s just all grist for the mill. They create with whatever comes your way. Max [Clayton] taught and embodied this principle himself through his practise of psychodrama.

So I went into the psychodrama world from an artistic exploration. I was never a psychologist but I learned enough psychology to be able to create with it. I learned group work techniques to be able to create with them. I then went into the organisational world and learned statistics. I’m not a statistician but I can create with it. So that’s an interesting thing for me at the moment but I actually come to the conclusion that my central identity is where I started which is I’m an artist. I create with things. I build things. I make things.

Rollo: Well that’s very Morenian because “the evolution of the creator is more important than the evolution of the creation.”

Warren: Yes.
Warren Parry is the Global Change Tracking lead in Accenture. Using an insight driven approach to build high-performance workforces, Warren helps clients navigate complex organizational change to drive business innovation and growth.

Warren pioneered the development of Change Tracking, a patented system of predictive analytics that enables business leaders to see whether change programs are on track and take corrective actions, as needed. Accenture use ChangeTracking to enhance the value of the change management services delivered to clients. It is used in more than 30 countries and in 20 languages in over 150 global organisations. Warren has filed 16 patents, published in international journals and speaks regularly at industry conferences.

Warren lives with his family in Sydney Australia. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) and Master of Philosophy in Fine Arts (Hons) from Auckland University in New Zealand and a BA(Psych) from Murdoch University in Perth Western Australia.

Rollo Browne is a Sociodramatist and TEP who has been applying Morenian methods for the past 25 years across his consulting and facilitation work. He has been training professionals to be psychodramatists since 1997. His work spans leadership training, organisational development and executive coaching. For the past 20 years, he has applied Morenian methods in his consulting and facilitation work.