The Metaphysical Tasks of the Psychodramatist

by Clare Elizabeth

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Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the purpose of my life? Such questions have arisen within the hearts and minds of men and women throughout history. As psychodramatists we are called upon to recognise that these questions are fundamental to human experience.

To respond to them we need to have grappled, or be grappling with, these areas of inquiry ourselves, albeit not having found satisfactory answers. Such endeavours are likely to result in a greater ability to effectively engage with our clients in their attempts to address such questions.

A challenge exists for many of us to take greater initiative in this area than we have done previously. Responding to this challenge will assist us to remain connected to the essence of Moreno's philosophy and theology as well as address our clients' needs for a relevant spirituality.

The Metaphysical Model of Humanity

What is Metaphysics?

The word 'metaphysics' literally means 'beyond the physical'. Human beings are natural metaphysicians in that we tend to ask certain fundamental questions. We know we are physical beings with a brain, heart, lungs and so on, but we also know we are more than this. When we ask 'Who am I?' we are not asking merely about our physical nature or even the nature of our personality. Rather, we are inquiring about a deeper reality which is experienced by us as being more fundamental than any other aspect of ourselves. It is that deeper reality which we sense when we say 'I'. And it is that to which we are referring when, with the death of a loved one, we say, 'I can still feel her spirit around me'. In metaphysics we search behind the outer towards an inner reality in an attempt to understand the nature and meaning of our own being and the universe.

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The Metaphysical Model

The metaphysical model (Schoenmaker, 1992) holds that we are a triune being, consisting of body, soul (mind) and spirit (God). The body is that which is associated with life and death in accordance with the laws of the physical world. The soul or psyche is that which experiences life in all its many facets. It is, therefore, the part of us that evolves and changes and can usefully be equated to consciousness. The three aspects of soul or consciousness are thinking, feeling and willing. The spirit is the eternal aspect of us, sometimes referred to as the I AM or our Spiritual 'I'. Spirit is not tied to the body and belongs to another realm of existence, hence the need for the soul to act as an interface between it and the body.

Spiritual Evolution

Within the metaphysical model the purpose or goal of spiritual evolution is the unifying or integration of soul with spirit. Integration is achieved through the development and expansion of consciousness, involving the three soul aspects of thinking, feeling and willing, and the overcoming of our egocentric tendencies. It is further assumed that each person has responsibility for his or her own spiritual development.

As the soul aspect continues to grow and develop, there is a greater ability to connect with and express our 'Spiritual "I"', as opposed to our 'egocentric "I"'. Within several of the major mystical traditions, the integration of the soul with spirit is sometimes referred to as the 'mystical marriage', in which the soul (the Bride) is united with God (the Bridegroom).

The Spiritual 'I' of the metaphysical model is comparable to concepts from different religious traditions, contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches and various New Age philosophies. The I AM of the Christian tradition, the Atman of the Hindu tradition, the Spiritual Self of Assagioli's Psychosynthesis, the Higher Power of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Higher Self of New Age thinkers, all allude to that aspect of our functioning which is the Spiritual 'I'.

The importance of consciousness and the relinquishing of our egocentricity in the process of spiritual evolution or development are ideas that are clearly not limited to the metaphysical model. Jung (1959) used the term 'individuation' to refer to the process that transforms human beings from unconscious to conscious and (thus) whole people. Individuation is essentially the idea that everything that is alive seeks to fulfil itself. An oak tree is an acorn that has individuated. Given the right conditions of climate, soil and moisture, the acorn will become the oak tree. Within human beings, however, the individuation process must be consciously experienced and expressed through an ego that has self-awareness and certain powers of choice. It is for this reason that Jung viewed the human individuation process as a spiritual and psychological, as well as, a natural process.

According to Sanford (1987), Fritz Kunkel emphasises the notion that if the ego is to perform its task in the process of development it must overcome its egocentricity. As long as a person is egocentric the ego will block rather than fulfil the urge toward growth. Only the person with true ego strength can afford to give up his/her egocentricity in order to become a willing servant of life. It is as a result of the transformation of our egocentric human self that we draw closer to and are able to express our divine self. A similar idea is put forward by Frankl (1984) when he says that '...self-actualisation is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence' (p133). Moreno (1946) also gives recognition to the need for us to be able to give up our own self-interest when he places role reversal as the final stage of personality development.

Within spiritual evolution it is sometimes helpful to equate the development of consciousness with the expansion of consciousness. Skolimowski (1994) argues that we need to develop 'new sensitivities' that increase our capacity to enter into, apprehend and express ourselves within new realities. Such realities include the realm of Assagioli's (1991) 'transpersonal

consciousness' which refers to those states of consciousness which 'are the result of coming or being brought involuntarily into contact with a plane or sphere of Reality which is "above" or "beyond" those which are normally regarded as "real"', a reality that 'is perceived as something more real, lasting and substantial than the everyday world in which we live, as the true source and essence of being...' (p19).

While not explicitly addressed within Morenian thinking, the concept of expanding consciousness is consistent with one of the goals within psychodrama of increasing role repertoire.

Broadly speaking, then, spiritual evolution or the integration of the soul and the spiritual 'I' or self requires an increase and/or expansion of consciousness. An important part of this process is becoming more aware of one's calling or life purpose.

James Hillman (1996) directs his exploration of the nature of humanity to the question 'What is the purpose of my life?' He gives fresh impetus to the old idea of the calling as a prime fact of human existence. He proposes that before we are born each of us is given a unique daimon which has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth. This daimon guides us here and remains at an unconscious level within us as the carrier of our destiny. 'A calling may be postponed, avoided, intermittently missed. It may also possess you completely. Whatever; eventually it will out. It makes its claim. The daimon does not go away' (p8).

The metaphysical model is consistent with a number of perspectives on the nature of humanity – those psychotherapeutic theories that incorporate a spiritual dimension, e.g. Jung's Analytical Psychology, Assagioli's Psychosynthesis, Frankl's Logotherapy, the philosophy and theories of Moreno, as well as various New Age philosophies. Furthermore, this conceptualisation is in implicit agreement with the writings of the mystics across major religious traditions. All of these share a general emphasis on the importance of integration both within the soul and

between the soul and the spiritual or higher self. A further emphasis exists in the important role given to developing consciousness in achieving this task, including becoming conscious of one's calling or purpose in life.

The metaphysical model is a dynamic model that incorporates both our 'being' and our 'becoming'. It brings together two perspectives that are currently emphasised in scientific, philosophical and religious thought. These are the evolutionary (developmental) and the systemic (holistic) dimensions – evolutionary in that development occurs through the augmentation of consciousness and the overcoming of our egocentricity, and systemic, in that such development (and by implication, interventions), can occur across multiple levels. The model's emphasis on the key role of self-responsibility in spiritual development concurs with Moreno's view of humanity as being co-responsible Co-Creators along with God.

The model explicitly incorporates both a systems and an evolutionary perspective, and, consequently, I have found it useful when applied in conjunction with Moreno's role model of personality functioning.

J. L. Moreno's Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology

Throughout his writings, Moreno (1955) continually emphasises the significance of his philosophical and religious roots in the development of his thinking and methods. 'All my inspirations for my methods and techniques have come directly or indirectly from my idea of the Godhead and from the principle of His genesis' (p31).

During the early part of the twentieth century, when there was a strong division between science and religion, Moreno attempted to create a marriage between the two. He wrote: 'It may be said that I tried to do through sociometry what "religion without science" has failed to accomplish in the past and what "science without religion" has failed to accomplish in Soviet Russia' (1955, p7). Many of his earlier writings illustrate Moreno's attempts to broaden the concept

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of psychiatry beyond its medical and sociological limitations and to broaden the concept of religion beyond its historical and theological limitations.

Moreno's Philosophy – Creativity, Spontaneity and Metapraxie

Moreno's philosophy is based on a belief in the central importance of the process of creativity as a fundamental and universal aspect of existence. He sees this process of creativity as intimately linked with, although not identical to, the process of spontaneity. Moreno (1934), in *Who Shall Survive*, views creativity as belonging to the 'categories of substance' and spontaneity to the 'categories of catalyser' (Student edition, 1993, p12). While these two phenomena provide the cornerstones of Moreno's sociometric conceptualisations, at a deeper level creativity and spontaneity involve metaphysical categories – they are concerned with the nature and properties of ultimate reality.

In attempting to develop a philosophical foundation for his theories of creativity and spontaneity, Moreno (1947) describes a metaphysical concept he called 'metapraxie'. Metapraxie is the innate potential within the world which exists within, and yet transcends, specific creative acts. In incorporating the word 'praxis' Moreno is trying to emphasise the idea of practice rather than theory, of the cosmos consisting more of an act, or a becoming, than a state of being, and of creative processes innate within the emergence of every event in the world.

Blatner and Blatner (1988b) expand upon some of Moreno's ideas to illustrate similarities between his concept of metapraxie and Bohm's theory of the wholeness and the implicate order of existence, Jung's theory of archetypes and the writings of the medieval Jewish mystics, the Kabbalists.

Moreno's Theology – The Godhead

Essentially, Moreno's theology is a creation theology. God is the underlying principle of spontaneity and creativity within the cosmos. Only in God has all spontaneity become

creativity. 'He is one case in which spontaneity and creativity are identical' (Moreno, 1934, quoted from Student edition, 1993, p11).

The Godhead is the name given by Moreno to represent a changing concept for a permanent universal principle (Kraus, 1984). Each person, as well as each culture and era, has their own version of the Godhead. 'At every crucial point in history the meaning of the universe has challenged man's mind. God – or what stood for the meaning-giving, central idea of the universe – had to achieve a form which was able to interpret man's place in the scheme of things' (Moreno, 1941, quoted from 1971 edition, pxii).

The Godhead, therefore, incorporates an evolutionary perspective and describes a progression from a distant God to a close God. We have moved from a 'He' God of the Mosaic tradition, through a 'Thou' God of the Christian, to a new dimension of the Godhead, an 'I' God, in the twentieth century.

God as Involved Creator – The 'I-God'

In *Preludes to My Autobiography*, Moreno (1955) describes how, in developing his idea of the Godhead, he drew a picture in his mind of what God might have looked like on the first day of creation. He saw clearly that 'Hovering over the chaos on the first day, he was there to create, not to take apart and to analyse' (p8), that 'God was first a creator, an actor, a psychodramatist' (p9). In other words, God was not Love, but rather, a Lover. He concluded that the 'creative definition of "Godplaying" is the *maximum of involvement*, the putting of everything unborn from the chaos into the first moment of being' (p9, emphasis added).

Moreno (1955) believed that the role of the objective scientist had been modelled after the idea of the impartial Godhead. 'He is objective, neutral, uninvolved, he is the impartial recorder of events as they emerge' (p32). However, while this model was adequate for the physical scientist, it was not sufficient for the social scientist who was interested in studying and building human communities based on love and mutual sharing.

In works such as 'Words of the Father',

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originally published in English in 1941, Moreno added a new dimension to the Godhead, that of subjectivity – the 'I-God' who 'comes forth alone and in full earnestness, creating and experiencing, with all the subjectivity of a real being' (Moreno, 1971 edition, px). Furthermore, by imagining God as existing in loving relationship with his creations, Moreno places both himself and God within a systems approach to humanity and the universe.

God in the 'first' person 'does not deprive the Godhead of the objectivity, neutrality and impartiality of the old model but it makes the path free for the exercise of cosmic empathy, love and intimate participation, in other words, for the psychodrama of God' (1955, p33). Such a God communicates, not through his prophets, nor through Jesus, but directly through each of us.

Humanity Evolving – Spontaneous Co-Creative Beings

As Moreno's speculations about the Godhead and His character evolved and deepened, he '...began to see God, not only as the One who assigned some of His spontaneity and creativity to every particle of the universe, but as One, who by so doing, created for Himself innumerable oppositions, the counter spontaneities of innumerable beings'. In so doing God made Himself dependent upon every being, and also '...made us and all beings far more dependent upon Him than we would have been had we not a share in some of His initiative and responsibility. The distribution of His spontaneity and creativity made Him a partner and equal. He was to serve, not to rule. He was to coexist, cocreate and coproduce' (Jonathon Moreno, 1989, p52).

Herein lies Moreno's view of humanity. When Moreno asked himself 'Who am I?' he looked not to the least but to the most he could be. He concluded that not only are we the biodynamic being of Darwin, the sociodynamic being of Marx and the psychodynamic being of Freud, but we are also a cosmodynamic being.

God is now fully and completely placed into the existence of every person, the 'I-God'.

If God is conceptualised as the spontaneity/ creativity in the universe and we each have been assigned a portion of this, then to know God is to be in touch with that part of ourselves, our own spontaneity/creativity. Hence, 'in order to exist meaningfully we must find the path of creativity and let it lead us into direct communication and identity with the Creator' (Moreno, 1941, quoted from 1971 edition, pxiv–xv).

Kraus (1984) considers that psychodrama was Moreno's way of reuniting mortals momentarily with God or the eternal world of all-spontaneity. 'It is a method for people who have fallen from their dreams. Each fall affirms their separation from God, and their mortality from their immortality' (p48). Through the psychodrama method, each 'fallen angel' is picked up and pointed towards the realisation of their hopes and desires.

> *Humanity is viewed as evolving and dynamic, comprising a system of biological, social, psychological and cosmic forces. Through and within the interaction of these different aspects we enact our fundamental impetus towards creative expression. While his ideas are part of a more general movement in philosophical and scientific thought towards the systems and evolutionary perspectives, Moreno's unique contribution lies in the way he places God at the centre of his philosophy.*

Moreno's Personality Theory – Spontaneity and Creativity within a System of Roles

Moreno's concept of spontaneity provides a bridge between his philosophy and his theory of personality functioning. Spontaneity is the catalyst which enables our creativity to

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emerge. It first awakens at birth and gives rise to initial acts which later develop into larger units of behaviour called roles.

For Moreno, personality is organised into a system of roles. Different roles develop at different stages of personality development. The last group to emerge are psychodramatic roles which provide us with a sense of our individual self.

> Spontaneity *promotes the development of new roles, which results in an expanded role repertoire and a greater personality integration, enabling us to live a more creative and therefore satisfying life.*

While Moreno did not explicitly utilise the concept of purpose in relation to personality functioning, this notion is implicit within his personality theory which views the human being as a developing system of roles. In *Words of the Father* when Moreno says, 'The essence of our existence is a craving to create...' he seems to be alluding to our purposes (Moreno, 1971 edition, pxiii). Purpose, therefore, is evident each and every time the individual strives to express his/her creativity.

The Metaphysical Tasks of the Psychodramatist

In my work as a psychotherapist, psychodramatist and trainer, I increasingly come into contact with people who are either consciously seeking to explore the spiritual dimension of their lives, or who might benefit from such an exploration.

If we accept the model outlined above with its emphasis on both being (the systems perspective) and becoming (the evolutionary perspective), then we can broadly conclude that the metaphysical task of the psychodramatist is to assist in the reconciliation and/or integration of body, soul and spirit. This requires us to act as a bridge-builder within and between the physical and spiritual

worlds. As we assist people to overcome their egocentricity and to express their spiritual self through the development and expansion of consciousness, greater spontaneity and creativity will emerge in them.

In a situation involving reconciliation, an effort is made to come together again after an estrangement or when a relationship has broken down. Within psychotherapy and psychodrama, attention is focused on assisting people to become more conscious of their separation from certain aspects of themselves.

This estrangement is of two varieties. In the first instance it occurs when we have split off from the painful or undesirable aspects of our functioning with regard to both ourselves and others. In the second instance it occurs when we have lost contact with that deeper, creative and life-giving spiritual dimension in our lives. In Moreno's view, unless we reconnect with the ground of our being, in which resides 'metapraxie', that innate creative potential within the world, we cannot become creative and spontaneous beings, co-responsible with God in the act of creating ourselves and the universe.

For the psychodramatist, the overall metaphysical task of reconciliation can be broken down into a number of smaller ones. This enables us to operationalise the task to the point where it becomes practical. The following list is not considered to be exhaustive, but rather represents my current thinking in the evolution of this model.

Task 1

To acknowledge our need for connection and reconciliation/integration with spirit, or that reality that lies beyond the realm of the physical.

Task 2

To assist people to find a relevant framework, including a language, that will accommodate or reflect their experience of the spiritual or that which is 'beyond', so that it strengthens their connection with spirit.

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Task 3

To assist people to raise their consciousness and to develop and integrate all aspects of their functioning.

Task 4

To assist people to take responsibility for creating themselves and their own lives, and, by extension, the community(ies) in which they live.

Task 5

To assist people to develop and act on an expanded evolutionary perspective, including identifying a greater life purpose for self and others.

Task 6

To assist people to identify their own spiritual direction and to develop and maintain its expression.

Task 7

To assist people who are locked into rigid personality role systems to go forward by activating metaphysical roles.

Case Study with a Summary Role Analysis

The following case study is accompanied by an analysis of the metaphysical tasks and roles of the Director. It focuses on key moments of interaction selected from a more comprehensive analysis outlined in my thesis.

In the work described below, I enact three metaphysical role clusters: THE BRIDGE, THE MENTOR and THE VISIONARY.

Background

Teresa is a young woman in her late thirties. She is primary caregiver for two teenage children. She is doing full-time postgraduate university study. At different times over the past seven years Teresa has completed a significant amount of personal development. Much of the work has involved doing social atom repair and addressing issues of

dependence/independence, power and control. She is less conflicted and has developed many new and satisfying roles.

When she comes to see me, Teresa is exhausted, experiencing difficulty in completing her university written work and having frequent conflict with one of her children. She feels guilty and ashamed that she is not coping. She has been realising the degree to which she has used her academic achievements to bolster herself up. This has driven her to push herself harder and harder in order to achieve success. She knows she cannot continue living in this manner, yet she is also frightened by the impending completion of her degree. What will she do then? She experiences an emptiness within herself which she feels hopeless about being able to fill.

Initially, Teresa's work with me involves revisiting her perfectionism, her feelings of shame, and, especially, her need to be in control. I then put forward the idea that she has devoted enough time to these issues. I suggest that now might be a time for her to forget about permanently resolving such conflicts, as this is an impossible task. I propose that we abandon such a focus on her difficulties, and instead converse in an ordinary human way about a wide range of topics.

A little further on Teresa arrives at a session saying in a somewhat mystified way that she has been thinking about prayer. She is unsure what to make of this. After some discussion, I read to her the first stanza of St John of the Cross's poem, 'The Spiritual Canticle', which speaks in lyric verse about the loving exchange which takes place between the soul and Christ, its Bridegroom.

> *Where have You hidden,*
> *Beloved, and left me moaning?*
> *You fled like the stag*
> *After wounding me;*
> *I went out calling You, and You were gone.*

Teresa is profoundly moved and tears stream down her face. She becomes aware of a deep yearning for a connection with God. She thinks that if she could surrender and trust in Him then maybe she would not have to be so

much in control. We talk about how her relationship with God might be developed and strengthened. She responds positively to my suggestion that she set aside an area of her bedroom to pray and meditate in. She is very cautious because she wants to develop an authentic spirituality, one which is her own and not one which she takes on from other people.

The role cluster of THE BRIDGE is fundamental. It is from this role that the Director functions to create, re-establish or strengthen the links between body, soul and spirit of the protagonist. This may involve assisting the person to develop and integrate different aspects of their role functioning, to reconnect or reconcile with their physical body or to strengthen their connection with the indwelling spirit – the Spiritual 'I'. Depending on the role system of the protagonist(s), a wide range of roles may be required of the Director in order to acknowledge the need for, and to assist a person to make, connections between all aspects of themselves.

When I read Teresa the verses from St John of the Cross' poem, I enact the role cluster of THE BRIDGE in the roles of Systems Analyst and Metaphor Spinner. I am also a Wise Person, one of the roles that contributes to the role cluster of THE VISIONARY (see below). Teresa experiences her deep need for connection with God and an ability to surrender her need for control as she enacts the roles of The Yearning Soul and Willing Yielder. Given Teresa's religious background and therefore the relevance of Christian terminology to her, I have named this progressive role cluster THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

In assisting Teresa to develop the Steadfast Pilgrim, an action-oriented contributing role of THE BRIDE OF CHRIST, I am attending to strengthening the relationship between soul and spirit. In terms of the metaphysical tasks, this intervention assists Teresa to take more responsibility for herself by initiating an action that will enable her to develop her spiritual life.

In response to my intervention, Teresa finds herself thinking and writing about the idea of 'surrender'. Her reservation about surrender is that she equates it with giving in and being defeated. There is no way she is going to be defeated! However, she also knows that she needs to give up driving herself and trying to be in control of everything. She is aware that she is going to have to take responsibility for herself in a new way but is not sure what this is and whether she is capable of it. At this stage, she has no sense of being loved by God. She has no clear idea or sense of who God is and therefore praying feels 'somewhat odd' to her. A further dilemma centres around how to surrender when she does not know who she is surrendering to.

Weekend Seminar/Workshop on 'Living as a Spiritual Being'

This workshop evolved out of a number of thoughts and observations in my life and work. Firstly, in both spheres of my life I had encountered many people who had discarded the traditional beliefs and practices they were raised with, but continued to be interested in the spiritual dimension of life. Secondly, excluding private study, I was aware of few contexts within which a person can both receive some teaching and also have an opportunity to explore their own spirituality. Thirdly, I was in the process of exploring the idea that activating a spiritual life by developing metaphysical roles might assist people to more easily leave behind dysfunctional patterns of behaviour.

My purpose in conducting this weekend was two-fold: to assist people to become more conscious of the presence and workings of spirit in their lives; and to assist people to develop a lifestyle which is based on spiritual principles that are harmonious with their souls' purposes.

Teresa is one of a group of twelve participants attending the weekend seminar/workshop. She enacts her psychodrama during the second session.

WARM-UP

I speak about the inevitability of human growth and development and the need to become more conscious of this process within ourselves. I identify the paradigm of The Journey as providing a helpful model for organising and giving meaning to the experiences of life. In this view, life is seen as a journey in which we must confront certain tasks and learn necessary lessons. I suggest that the journey motif can be valuable as a metaphor for the journey of the soul towards oneness with spirit. I refer to the eastern view of the soul's journey over many lifetimes. I present Clift and Clift's (1988) variation of Joseph Campbell's model of the heroic journey and describe its stages: the Call to Adventure, the Initiation or the Road of Trials, and the Return Home. Following this, I instruct participants to take the opportunity to be on their own and become aware of the stage of the journey most relevant to them at this time.

> THE VISIONARY is a fundamental metaphysical role cluster of the psychodramatist in that it draws on a vision of embracing purpose and direction for both the individual and for creation as a whole. THE VISIONARY is able to see beyond the concrete and the immediate, to an immanent reality. Some of the roles that contribute to the role cluster of THE VISIONARY during the warm-up phase include 'The Evolutionary', the Seeker of Meaning and the Wise Person. These are enacted when I speak about the phenomenon of spiritual development and life purpose, and the need to become more conscious of this process within ourselves. I have coined the term 'The Evolutionary' because it suggests not only one who thinks in terms of developmental or evolutionary processes but one who also has a significant action component to the role. The 'Evolutionary', therefore, is a midwife to the process of evolution. In response to these roles, Teresa and other group members warm up to the roles of Thoughtful Traveller, Seeker of Meaning and 'The Evolutionary'.

After about ten minutes, participants come together and share what they have been thinking and writing about. Teresa acknowledges a response in herself to the call to be one with God. Like many of the heroes of myth and legend she is aware that, although she has slain some dragons in the course of her journey, there is one last dragon to be confronted on her way home. She can see the peace that awaits her but is also afraid. She knows that slaying the dragon will change her forever.

Teresa comes forward in response to my invitation to the group to explore the journey though a psychodramatic enactment.

INTERVIEW

Teresa quickly establishes a purpose for the drama. She wishes to let go of wanting to control everything, and to be able to surrender, trusting that she will not disintegrate in the process. I acknowledge this as an excellent purpose. I say, 'This drama will be different from those you have done in the past. It would be good if you could forget about how you have gone about dramas previously, and let go of any expectations about how this one might turn out.' Teresa laughs and says 'Okay'.

> Here I am taking on another role which is crucial to attending to the metaphysical tasks. This is the role cluster of THE MENTOR. The mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser. As 'one who has gone before', s/he possesses a loving authority within the roles of companion and teacher. THE MENTOR contains many roles, only a few of which may be enacted in any particular situation. During the Interview I enact roles of the Naive Inquirer, the Wise Person, the Loving Companion, the Benign Witness and the Believer in the Creative Genius. In response to these roles, Teresa takes up the roles of Trusting Companion, Enjoyer of Life and Naive Adventurer, trusting in what lies ahead and able to act and go forward with enjoyment.

ACTION PHASE

Teresa has a picture and I instruct her to set it out. Using auxiliaries, cushions and other props, she creates a rocky pass. It is very narrow with high walls and has big boulders strewn along it. A huge, green, slimy dragon guards the pass. He has a massive tail which is used to sweep boulders around so that no one can sneak up on him. As the dragon, Teresa is very animated, roaring and belching orange and blue fire, boasting, 'No one can get past me!'

On the other side of the pass Teresa sets out heaven, using a table decorated with lengths of blue and purple silk material, white candles and white flowers. She concretises God using a large crucifix which is raised higher than the table.

I direct Teresa in several role reversals with the dragon. She clearly enjoys being the dragon, becoming more grandiose and powerful with each role reversal. 'This is my pass, and no one gets past me!'

In the role of herself, Teresa is initially dismissive and contemptuous – 'You're all flame, no brain!' – but later turns away, defeated by the might and power of the dragon – 'What's the point? I've been here so many times before, and I never get through it.'

I instruct Teresa to choose someone to mirror her in her role of confronting the dragon. In response to the auxiliary's mirroring of herself, Teresa becomes angry and forceful. 'Just get going! You know you have to do this so just get on and do it! Just get up there and get going though the pass!'

In the role reversal Teresa becomes passive and sullen, complaining that it is too difficult. In a further role reversal, Teresa is contemptuous and coldly berating, calling her other self 'useless'. She turns away in disgust. In the role of her other self, Teresa responds by lowering her head and looking at the floor. 'It's so true, I am useless. I can't get beyond this.'

> At this point, as well as being in the role of Producer, I am enacting the Consciousness-Builder, one of the roles that contribute to the role cluster of THE BRIDGE. From the role of Systems Analyst I observe the re-emergence of an historic and dysfunctional system. I enact the role of Consciousness Builder as I intervene to assist Teresa to once again become conscious of her longing for reconnection with, and surrender to, God.

I reverse Teresa back into her contemptuous and rejecting self, and say to her, 'I'm going to read you something'. Again I recite the first stanza from St John of the Cross' poem, 'A Spiritual Canticle'. Teresa begins to cry as I complete the first line. I go over to her and, taking her by the hand, lead her to her other self. Teresa, in addressing this other self, says that she knows it is hard for her. She is then silent and hesitant for a time. I take Teresa's hand and place it over the heart of her other self. Teresa cries and tells this self that she will be with her in this difficult task and that she does not have to do it alone.

> At this point I am attending to the metaphysical tasks of reconciliation and integration from within the role cluster of The Bridge by assisting Teresa to link with her Spiritual 'I'. It is my view that Teresa was enabled to continue to move out of the roles of Drill Sergeant, Contemptuous Berator and Sullen Defeatist because my interventions activated a developing metaphysical role - The Bride of Christ.

On my instruction, Teresa chooses an auxiliary to be God. Turning to God, Teresa tells Him that she wants to be with Him but is frightened. In the role of God, Teresa says to herself that He aches for her and that He wants her as much as she wants Him. Reversed into the role of herself, Teresa cries freely and vigorously. She walks up to the pass and begins to enter it. I reverse Teresa into the role of the dragon. He stops slashing his tail

and belching fire, but stands in front of Teresa, barring her way. In the role of herself, Teresa tentatively tells the dragon that she is going through the pass. In a further role reversal, Teresa, in the role of the dragon, makes the claim that she cannot enter the pass because she needs him.

I instruct Teresa (as the dragon) to say more about this to herself. The dragon tells Teresa that she needs him to guard and protect her, that he has been doing his job for years, and that he refuses to be made redundant! In a role reversal Teresa replies in a soft and faltering voice that she really does not need him any more. Teresa, in the role of the dragon, stands firm in his belief in the need for his historical task of protection. In the role of herself, Teresa gives up.

I remind Teresa that she does not have to do it alone, that perhaps God could be of some assistance. Teresa calls out to God that she needs to know that He is actually there. Teresa, in the role of God, is moved. He stretches out His arms, saying in a tender voice that He has created this garden for her. He invites her to come into His garden where He is waiting for her. In the role of herself, Teresa cries and becomes very agitated. She says to God that she really wants to go into His garden but that the dragon is too strong for her. She appeals to God for help.

Teresa, in the role of God, begins to move towards herself and the dragon in the rocky pass. At this point I intervene with God, saying that I am not sure that such an initiative is wise, that perhaps He is doing the work that must be Teresa's. Teresa (in the role of God) considers this and then speaks clearly and lovingly to herself. 'I will wait for you in my garden. Find a way of coming to me.'

Within a role cluster such as THE BRIDE OF CHRIST there exists a tension between active pursuit and active surrender. The Soul (Bride) desires contact and union (integration) with The Lover (Christ, the Bridegroom). In order for this connection to occur Teresa must actively pursue the

relationship. Union with the Beloved also requires surrender of the self, especially those negative aspects of self. It is for this reason that, in the role of The Clinician, I intervene with God as He initiates action which will effectively prevent Teresa from taking this necessary step. Until Teresa is able to relinquish several fragmenting roles, such as the Sullen Defeatist, the Contemptuous Berator and the Powerful Controller, the connection with God that she is wanting is unlikely to occur.

In the role of herself again, Teresa is apprehensive and takes a step back. She then moves forward and begins a dialogue with the dragon. In a firm voice she tells him that she does not need anyone to stand guard for her any more. Furthermore, she no longer needs to control everything, she will be safe, and God will be there for her in His garden. Teresa, in the role of the dragon, is sceptical and reluctant to give up his protective function. I intervene, suggesting to the dragon that he cares a lot for Teresa and that this is why he has always fought so hard to protect her. The dragon visibly softens, and his eyes glint with tears. He tells Teresa that he loves her and that it is hard for him to stop protecting her.

In the role of herself, Teresa takes a step toward the dragon, and then stops. I instruct her to do what she has been wanting to do for a long time. She embraces the dragon, telling him that she loves and admires him, and thanking him for being her protector. 'I am going to find you a nice dry cave in Bavaria which has lots of nice boulders that you can sweep with your tail.' Teresa, as the dragon, expresses relief at his impending retirement, but nevertheless reassures Teresa that he is always available if needed! As herself, Teresa then builds the dragon a cave and leads him into it. In a series of role reversals, Teresa and the dragon share much warmth and laughter before waving goodbye to each other.

I instruct Teresa that she has five minutes in which to complete the drama. Teresa walks slowly and purposefully through the pass,

gazing continuously into the face of God. She reaches God, embraces Him, and cries. She rearranges her arms so that God's arms are clasped around hers. In the role of God, Teresa says to herself with utmost tenderness, 'I have waited a long time for you to come'. As herself again, Teresa cries and laughs and says she has too! Teresa, in the role of God, continues to speak about how much He has wanted her to enter His garden. I instruct Teresa to reverse back into her own role and to allow herself to take in what God is saying, and to fully experience being with God. She sighs and smiles gently. Her whole body relaxes.

After a time, Teresa sits down on a cushion on the floor and instructs the auxiliary (in the role of God) to sit behind her. She leans back luxuriously into God's arms, and makes a joke about her learning to lean on God! After a few minutes of silence, I say, 'Thank you very much, Teresa, this drama is now finished. Let's have some sharing'.

As Teresa's drama progresses she is able to leave behind her fragmenting roles and to warm up to a greater level of spontaneity expressed within the role cluster of THE BRIDE OF CHRIST. She becomes a Liberated Captive, a Willing Yielder and a Delighted Lover. One of the reasons that Teresa is able to warm up to, and further develop, the progressive role of THE BRIDE OF CHRIST has to do with the mirroring function I perform for her. Her acceptance of my role of THE MENTOR would not have been possible without having certain metaphysical roles developed in me. Teresa perceives the presence of the role of THE BRIDE OF CHRIST in me even though this role is not overtly or fully expressed at this time.

Conclusions and Implications

1 The philosophical foundation of our lives underpins the way we live and informs everything we plan and strive for. So, as practitioners we are called to ask ourselves if we have an adequate worldview, one that enlivens both ourselves and those we work with, that takes us and them forward in our development. This invites us to take on a philosophy and a model of humanity that both adequately embraces the various levels of existence and functioning as is currently known, and is large enough to point to and accommodate other and as yet unknown levels of existence. Such models of humanity are likely to include the deeper or spiritual dimension of life. Skolimowski (1994) writes: 'Genuine philosophy for our times must help us to understand ourselves and the universe in a *new* way and help us live in it. It must address itself to the *total person*, his/her quest for understanding, for meaning, for consolation' (pxv, emphasis added).

2 If we accept the evolutionary imperative, then we need to remain cognisant of the fact that, as our mind and knowledge of ourselves and the universe evolve, so also will the theories and the models we develop to accommodate these. To remain within the spirit of Moreno's thinking, including his spontaneity/creativity principle of life and learning, we are challenged to continue to evolve our thinking, ever willing to discard old and outworn models of humanity. Such activity will ensure that we will keep generating new models in the light of fresh insights and knowledge. This applies to both practitioners and trainers of the method.

3 My experience within the psychodrama culture of New Zealand and Australia indicates that Moreno's philosophical and religious ideas, which are the foundation of his method of psychodrama, have been neglected by teachers, students and practitioners of the method alike. If trainees, from the outset, are to develop not only a love for the method itself but also an understanding of and appreciation for its metaphysical origins, then trainers especially need to hold such knowledge in the forefront of their thinking.

4 The metaphysical model provides psychodrama practitioners with a model of humanity that explicitly describes and attends to the nature of the relationship between the human and the divine aspects of self. Among other things, as human beings

we are linked by our shared divinity. It is within our relationships with others that we both learn to role reverse and to apprehend such shared divinity. Moreno's earliest vision encompassed a community based on faith in each other's intentions and a 'mutual love and sharing as a powerful, indispensable working principle in group life...' (Moreno, 1955, p7). The power and efficacy of the group in generating an awareness and expression of both our human and divine natures continues to be of ongoing relevance to group workers and practitioners of the method.

5 The presence of purpose is a defining characteristic of all living systems. Whether implicitly or explicitly stated, the idea of purpose is central in both psychodrama and in the metaphysical model. It is important, however, to consider purpose at many levels. Moreno considered that the essence of our existence was a 'craving to create' and thereby become co-creators along with God. However, the meaning we ascribe to our creative endeavours at any point in time is related to our own perception of purpose(s). The same activity can serve a variety of purposes ranging from the micro to the macro level. A parent assisting her disabled child may be meeting a school requirement, preparing him for later life, or fulfilling her own destiny to care for someone who has been 'given' to her. The work of psychodrama practitioners is enhanced by recognising and remaining conscious of the multi-levelled nature of our life purposes.

6 The metaphysical model can be seen to include the 'how' of evolution. It can be viewed as a way of life which focuses on the need to take responsibility for our thinking, feeling, and willing (acting), as we create ourselves and the communities and world in which we live. Blatner and Blatner (1988b), while acknowledging that Moreno's metapraxie contains '...a moral, existential injunction to participate as co-creators of this world' (p161), also suggest (1988a) that a retreat from responsibility is the predominant problem in the second half of the twentieth century. Moreno's approach focuses on developing spontaneity which strengthens a

person's flexibility of mind and thus assists him/her to take responsibility for self and community.

7 Within the metaphysical model, there is a focus on the development and expansion of consciousness and the overcoming of our egocentric tendencies through the development of the three soul aspects of thinking, feeling and willing. While taking responsibility for our lives and fulfilling our life purpose does involve our thinking and feeling, it especially involves the activation of the will. The birth of creativity requires action. Willing can be viewed as the power to act. Where there is no will, there is no action, and without action, the creative spirit remains unborn. Similarly, within the theory and practice of psychodrama there is a focus on developing our ability to act in order to fully develop and express roles that enable us to take creative responsibility for our lives. This has important implications for those of us who teach about the application of role theory. We can, at times, become myopic and fail to see how roles need to be actualised through action.

8 The evidence of twenty years of my clinical practice suggests that there is a tendency for people to naturally move on to spiritual concerns once their biography is complete. If we accept the existence of the spiritual dimension in life, perhaps there is no need for us to wait for our clients to raise spiritual issues with us. Perhaps psychotherapists and psychodramatists might take the initiative in assisting those we work with to warm up to and attend to their spiritual development. This might involve directing them to attend to the inner promptings of their Spiritual 'I', or to become conscious of their calling or life purpose. It may involve developing a variety of frameworks, language and metaphors to assist people to become aware of and make sense of the spiritual dimension in their lives. Or it might involve the exploration of an evolving concept of God that is life-enhancing and promotes self-responsibility and the expansion of roles.

9 The view of human beings as consisting of a system of interactive roles encompassing

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physical, social, psychological and spiritual realities means that interventions within any one of these dimensions can effect change and development. We need not to be too narrow in our approach or too hasty in relegating our clients' feelings of discontent and restlessness to the exclusive domain of the psychological. Directors of psychodrama groups, and psychotherapists working within an individual setting, may find that assisting the development of metaphysical roles within people can assist them to move out of fragmenting role systems.

10 This paper has made little comment about our functioning within the physical dimension – the 'body' in the metaphysical model. This is not surprising, given that consultation about and treatment of physical symptoms generally falls within the domain of medical practitioners and related professions. Within both psychotherapy and psychodrama, treatment of the body per se is not the goal. Rather, any focus on the body is viewed more as an entry point into the treatment of the psychological system. Nonetheless, it is wise for us to remain conscious of the physical dimension. Clients who consult with us concerning the psyche but who also exhibit symptoms of the body may be better served by having the latter treated first. Again, we need to be open to the possibility that interventions within one dimension, in this case, the physical, will be more effective in terms of the development of the whole person.

11 If we are to assist in the spiritual development of others, as practitioners we must first give witness to our own. We need to develop metaphysical roles that incorporate the hidden dimension of our lives, that attend to the fundamental questions of our existence and that address our need to be an individual who is both separate from, yet intimately connected with, that deeper reality which is shared by all of Creation.

While a number of metaphysical roles have been delineated in the case study, I suggest that other significant metaphysical roles might be required and offer the following:

❖ The Beloved of God

❖ The Venerator (one who reveres all of Life)

❖ The Delighter in Magic and Mystery

❖ The Mystical Scientist or 'neo theologica' (one who recognises the Oneness and Interconnectedness of Life)

❖ The Shape-Seer (one who apprehends universal patterns)

❖ The Willing Co-Creator

❖ Humble God (one who remembers both our divine and human status)

In conclusion, I would like to remind readers that one of the literal translations of the word 'spirit' is 'breath'. As breath gives life, so may we, as Servants of Life, also give life. It is through the full and rich expression of our own selves that we best assist one another to breathe deeply and draw upon the divine ground of our being – our creativity. Through the development of spontaneity we become more able to express this creativity, and thereby enact the role of Responsible Co-Creator along with God in the Universe. This is both our challenge and our Grail.

'as breath gives life,
so may we, as Servants
of Life, also give life'

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The Social Atom Diagram Expanded

by Dr Neil E. Hucker

Neil Hucker has a private practice as a psychiatrist in Melbourne. He has a special interest in the application of the psychodrama method to psychiatric disorders and in particular its use in one-to-one psychotherapy.

In this article he presents an expanded three-dimensional representation of the social atom diagram. Neil describes how this representation captures a dynamic flowing process. He illustrates its usefulness in work with a client.

One of the unique elements of psychodramatic work is that it allows the visualisation of a person's experience in three-dimensional space on the stage. As scenes emerge progressively in a psychodrama, different social atoms or aspects of social atoms are displayed. To help me record and explore this complexity in my mind, I have been developing the visual representation shown below. It integrates a record of the social atom, the cultural atom and the person's sociometry.

By creating this three-dimensional representation of a person's collective social atom, I can interact more creatively and comprehensively in my imagination. It allows me to fly or swim around the diagram and interact with the sociometric process in a much more wholistic way.

The representation is in the form of a tree which allows me to warm up to the dynamic recycling flow of life.

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The Expanded Diagram

The diagram schematically represents an individual's self (a,b,c) at a particular point in time in their life. There is a core base (a) and an ascending trunk (b) which is surrounded by the current social atom being dealt with (d). The stack of social atom records (e) represents the accumulated social atom experiences of this person. I imagine this as a stack of 45 records or CDs (depending on one's vintage) which can be played as required and the one which is being focused on becomes (d).

From the overhanging extensions (c) descending branches (f), representing the

patient's roles or role clusters intersect at (g) representing the relevant people on the standard social atom diagram.

The basic core of the individual's self structure (a,b,c) is constructed of three concentric layers representing the central psychosomatic roles (h), the psychodramatic roles (i) and the social roles (j). These layers extend down through (f) and are expressed in the relationships in the social atom.

Each person (g) in the protagonist's social atom (d) has their own social atoms (k) in which they are at the centre (g). Within (k) I can display my protagonist's position (l) in relation to this person.
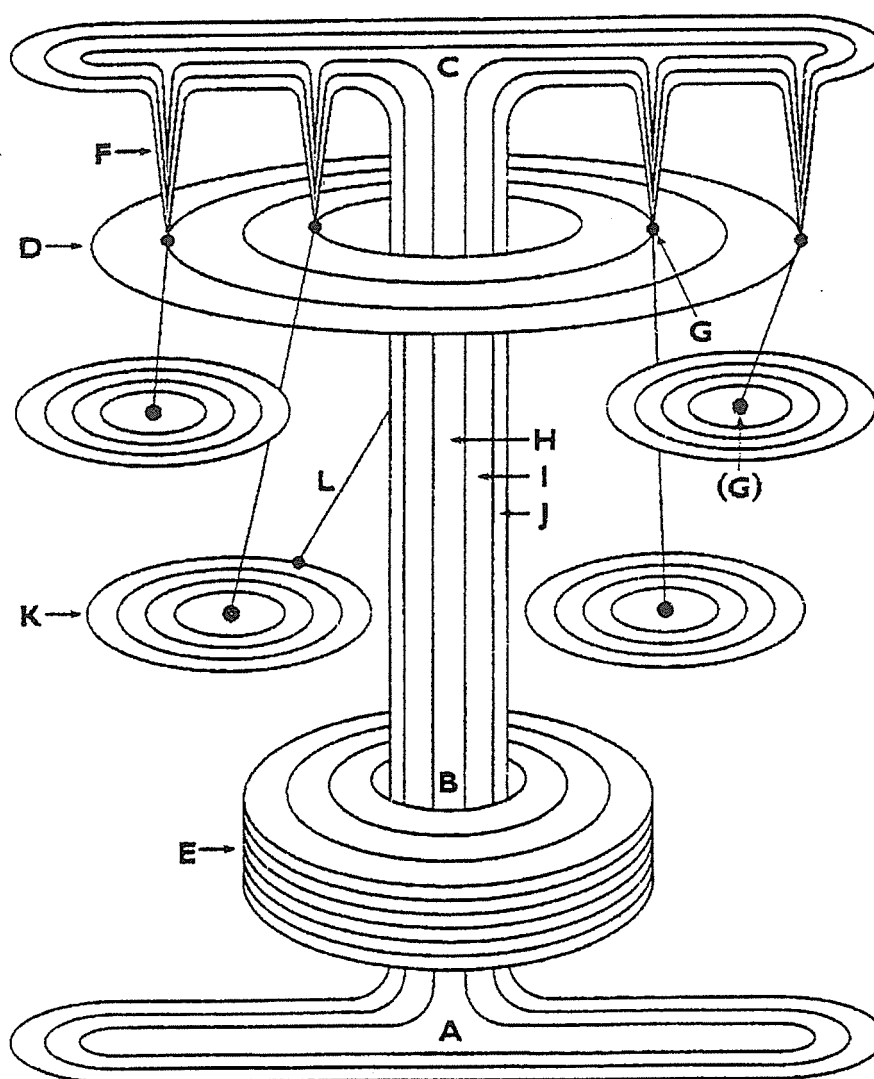

FIGURE 1: THE EXPANDED DIAGRAM

Using the Expanded Diagram

I use this diagram in recording and reflecting on my work with patients. When I see a person's social atom constellations in this way, a schematic dynamic flow very much like cartoon images emerges. This complements my imagining of the actual people in the person's world.

The core (a,b,c) can be seen as an ongoing flowing state of a person as they function from moment to moment. Made up of all that has gone before within the recorded social atoms (e) as well as what is going on in the present (d).

From this core, interactions with specific people (g) warm the protagonist up to a range of roles (f) that emerge in their social atom. These roles or clusters can manifest themselves singly or as a cluster of psychosomatic, psychodramatic and social roles (h,i,j).

In psychodrama explorations, a person's roles (f) in their own social atoms (d) at different times (e) are enacted. These roles are enacted in the other people's social atoms (k). Often sequences of scenes are displayed tracing back to the spontaneity state that created the conserved role. The stack of records (e) gives me a very easy visual representation of the person's roles and their social atom history.

Case Example

I used this expanded social atom representation in the following clinical situation:

A person (a,b,c) presents to me (G) in the role of the suicidally depressed grieving sibling (f), following the unexpected death of a sibling ((G)) in an accident. At the time of presenting, the patient's relationship with his brother has been the most significant positive relationship in his social atom. In the brother's social atom (I) the patient was not the only person the brother has a positive link with. In all of the social atoms of his siblings and particularly in the social atoms of his mother and father, the patient experiences himself as an estranged outsider.

When I explored his past social atom configurations (e) using the criteria of significant loss and abandonment, the following events were displayed. I will list them chronologically to show how they appear to me as a stack of social atom records.

1. Loss of brother.

2. Loss of most recent girlfriend.

3. Loss of a significant career position.

4. Loss of other girlfriends.

5. Abandonment by mother after parental separation.

6. Loss of family unit and parental marital unit.

7. Loss of another sibling at the age of eight.

8. Loss of a sense of having any value in his father's eyes as a young child.

9. Loss of first child exclusiveness with the birth of subsequent siblings.

At the time of each of these events there is a specific social atom configuration within which loss and grief occurred. When each of these situations emerges spontaneously or are explored systematically, an ongoing series of unresolved grieving processes are exposed. The repetitive role displayed is the withdrawn, isolating, unexpressing and grieving child. As the various phases of the current grief over the dead brother are worked through, each of the preceding unresolved grief situations emerge. This allows a more complete degree of social atom repair to occur.

Eventually, the helpless, hopeless lover's core belief emerges. 'Whoever I love and enjoy leaves me because there is something wrong with me. It is all my fault.' Once the inadequacy of this belief is confronted and resolved, the person is able to again rework the various loss situations and complete the social atom repair and healing.

During our work together a change evolved in people's positions in my patient's current social atom (d). His position in their social atoms (k) moved from isolate to an ongoing enjoyer of family life and relationships.

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Conclusion

This visual representation of the current social atom (d), and the collection of previous significant social atom configurations (e), allows me as a social atom systems analyst to have a flexible structure to remember, explore and experience a person's social atom movements with.

When the people in a particular person's social atom are displayed like this, the fractal extensions of social relatedness in the here-and-now and in the past can be displayed ad infinitum.

When I visualise and represent the social atom system and its history in this three dimensional schematic way, I am able, by floating through it interactively, to hold the complexity of a person's relationships more comprehensively. It also helps me to not underestimate the sociometric links involved in the life of a person's social atom.

the fractal extensions of social relatedness in the here-and-now and in the past can be displayed ad infinitum

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Tele with Animals

by Sara Crane

Sara is a psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer working with individuals, families and community groups in the Christchurch area. She particularly enjoys working with children and is currently completing her thesis on this topic. Sara is on the teaching staff of the Christchurch Institute for Training in Psychodrama. She lives outside the city in Governors Bay where she is endeavouring to follow permaculture principles.

I have always loved animals. From early childhood I persistently brought home strays, nursed forsaken fledglings and spent many hours observing creatures in their natural environments.

One of the joys in discovering psychodrama was the encouragement it gave me to expand my psychodramatic animal roles. The steely hawk-eye view and the ancient wisdom of the tuatara serve me well in professional settings.

In the therapeutic work I undertake with children there are sometimes opportunities to utilise the relationships children make with animals to increase their warm-up to a role, enhance their creativity and assist them to come up with enabling solutions to stuck situations.

While in real life we cannot completely reverse roles with animals and know all that they experience, we can do this in psychodrama – using surplus reality to explore the role relationship. The fact that we don't know what animals experience can be used to develop creativity in children in their relationships with animals. Imagination is often very fully engaged, as the child invents what the animal feels and what it might say.

There is room for a directness in relationships with animals that may be harder to achieve with another human being. A well-loved pet is perceived as not holding grudges and always being pleased to see you. This quality of relationship with an animal can strengthen the roles that bring about self-belief and self-confidence in the child.

Tele is a two-way flow of feeling between those in relationship – which can be positive, negative or neutral. Tele in relationships with animals sometimes has greater simplicity than in those with people. The child feels positive towards the bird as she feels the soft down of a baby chick or gosling. She has the experience of positive feeling coming from the animal as a dog wags its tail or a cat purrs.

I have noticed time and time again how the client's level of warm-up to relationship increases markedly when I bring my dog to

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therapy sessions. A withdrawn or hostile child is easily able to respond to a dog they perceive as friendly. Experiencing the dog's presence engenders a new response in the child previously prone to relating to others from coping or fragmenting roles.

However, there are also instances in which negative tele is present in the relationship; for instance when a child is frightened by a dog who barks loudly or when a cat scratches the child, doesn't come towards them or runs away.

Six-year-old Sharon brought her pet parakeet to visit me. When Polly wouldn't sit on her shoulder she shouted at her. Her mother yelled at Sharon and Polly flew up and settled on the curtain. Sharon promptly shook the curtain wildly trying to dislodge her.

I suggested to Sharon that she could have a turn being a bird. She took up the role of the pirate's favourite parrot and, selecting a penguin puppet to help her warm up to the role, she became a very raucous bird. As the bird, she liked being sung to by the pirate's friend, who was cooking sausages. As the pirate she was a determined dictator.

After the enactment I ask Sharon what sort of song she thought Polly would like sung to her. She suggested 'Miss Polly had a dolly' and that we could sing 'sweetly' so Polly would know we are kind and we wouldn't chase her. When Sharon climbed on the sofa and put out her hand the parakeet willingly clambered on her arm and nestled into her shoulder.

Her increased spontaneity and creativity brought out a different response in Polly. If I hadn't intervened at the point when Sharon shook the curtain it is probable that a more negative tele towards Polly would have been established.

People can use their relationships with animals to escape from human relationships or as a substitute for human contact. I recall a childhood neighbour whose very aggressive St Bernard dog prevented anyone from visiting her; and how she eventually gave up work to look after the dog.

We may use the relationship with a loved pet to comfort and soothe ourselves in a way that increases and enhances our positive warm up to relationship. For many elderly people who live on their own, pets assist them to live with their human aloneness and act as a focus for meaningful connections with others. Similarly, with children, the right pet can provide a context for needed abilities to develop.

Jason was a large, poorly coordinated six year old who had the overdeveloped roles of boisterous demander, piratical invader and frustrated boxer. With his pet mouse 'Whitey' some embryonic and underdeveloped roles grew. I witnessed a tender nurturer, delicate precise handler and gentle considerate planner. Provided with the opportunity to relate to a vulnerable creature in a new and spontaneous way, Jason started to develop the roles of joyful playmate and cooperative friend with myself and with his mother.

There was a magic moment when he took up his mother's suggestion of giving Whitey a whole small apple to eat. Whitey couldn't get his teeth into the apple and it kept rolling away. So Jason got us to make a hole in the apple to 'start it off' and then wedge it firmly so it wouldn't roll away. This started off a series of creative innovations to the mouse house in which the three of us participated. Jason gave us very clear directions while gently holding and stroking Whitey and letting him know what was happening to his house.

There is something more. Some parents are simply not able to attend to their children in a way that conveys love and acceptance and for some of these children, animals can provide a substitute. This is relevant in therapeutic work with adults.
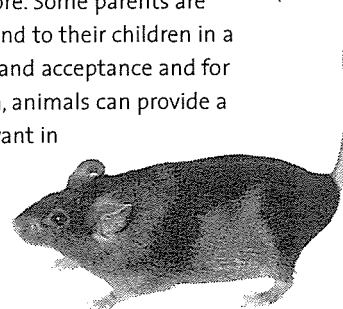
Frances, a young quiet woman attending her first psychodrama workshop, was setting out her original social atom with a view to speaking out to her father. As she concretised the hostile relationships between herself, her mother and her older siblings, her confidence in herself diminished.

The context for the scene was the farm in Central Otago where she had grown up, so I inquired if there were any pets or animals with whom she had had a positive relationship. Immediately she remembered her dog with warmth and delight.

When she role-reversed with the black and white collie dog, his playful personality altered the emotional tone of the setting. Strengthened by this relationship, she was able to move forward and address each of her family members directly, using the collie as a supportive double.

During the sharing phase other group members recalled animals whom they have experienced as understanding, listening and affectionate; at times in otherwise sterile environments.

In conclusion, the potential for playfulness and love can be expressed through many varied experiences of relating to animals. The revolting vigour of our pigs' appetites, the mounting tension as harriers scan our valley for prey, the glorious evensong of the bell-bird all feed my joy in life. So in my work with others I carry forward an alertness to this magic.

the potential for playfulness and love can be expressed through many varied experiences of relating to animals

A Systems Approach to School Bullying

by Rollo Browne

Rollo Browne works as an education and training consultant in Sydney. He is an advanced sociodrama trainee and is on the teaching staff at the NSW Psychodrama Training Institute. His work frequently involves conducting teacher in-service programs on gender issues and student behaviour.

Bullying and harassment exist in every school and are an expression of social dynamics within the school system. Historically, schools have been ineffective in doing much about bullying.

I am invited to a high school to conduct staff development on bullying and harassment. This involves me in speaking with parents; running a half-day staff development seminar with ninety teaching and administrative staff; and meeting with the welfare committee of twelve teachers.

The Special Projects teacher who invites me to do this work says the school recognises it had a significant problem and she is keen to do something effective. She reports 'a very strong us-and-them mentality among students', and lets me know that 'the students refer to this place as a prison'. A survey on bullying of all students has been conducted in the lead-up to the staff development program. Most students see bullying in the school 'as a major concern'.

Of those students surveyed 30 per cent are bullied once a week or more. Bullying is worse overall for boys than for girls, and most frequent among Year 7 boys. In particular, Year 11 students report harassment and abuse from groups of Year 7 boys. In NSW, the high school years are from Year 7 (12–13 year olds) to Year 12 (17–18 year olds).

Taking A Systems Approach

As I commence this work I am keen to make an assessment of the school and community system rather than simply focus on student behaviour or on solutions for teachers. I know this will maximise the possibility for an enabling solution to the issues being presented.

I am focusing on systems being open or closed. While no human system can survive if it closes itself to its environment, I know human systems selectively close themselves to certain input. This is relevant to my effectiveness as a source of potential input.

As I commence I am working with the following hypotheses:

❖ Organisations, as human systems, exhibit characteristics of both openness and closure at the same time; that is, partially open to certain things and closed to others.

❖ Human systems are open to information that supports their existing purpose and identity.

❖ Human systems are typically closed to information that threatens system identity.

❖ Consequently, human systems will accept new information and concepts if they are linked to system purpose and are supportive of core aspects of system identity.

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❖ Relationships within the organisation can be described as open or closed to learning (a sociometric description).

The School and Its Community

The school is relatively new and currently has 950 students. It is a large institution about two kilometres from the nearest centre. The students come from a series of small towns spread around the district, each with its own fierce loyalties and a sense of closed ranks. There is immense diversity across the extended school community: from the very wealthy to the timber-getters, surfies, hippies, ferals, armed forces and the local Aboriginal community, and also a few Asian students.

Almost all students arrive by bus, some travelling for up to an hour. A few walk and some ride bicycles. Buses are allowed to load many more students than there are seats (for example 98 when there are 64 seats). A large number of students have to stand for the journey, and many bus routes are over windy roads and this involves a lot of jostling and holding on round the curves. As one teacher described it: 'The kids are already geeed up when they arrive at school. They have to wait in huge queues to get a place in the bus. Some have to wait up to 40 minutes. The bus thing is a huge problem'. Misbehaviour on the bus is legally the bus driver's responsibility but the bus company keeps saying the school is responsible. The bus company has met many times with the school and so far there has been no resolution.

A number of parents have expressed dissatisfaction with discipline at the school. Enrolments for Year 7 next year are down by one third on expected projections. Some parents were taking the option of putting
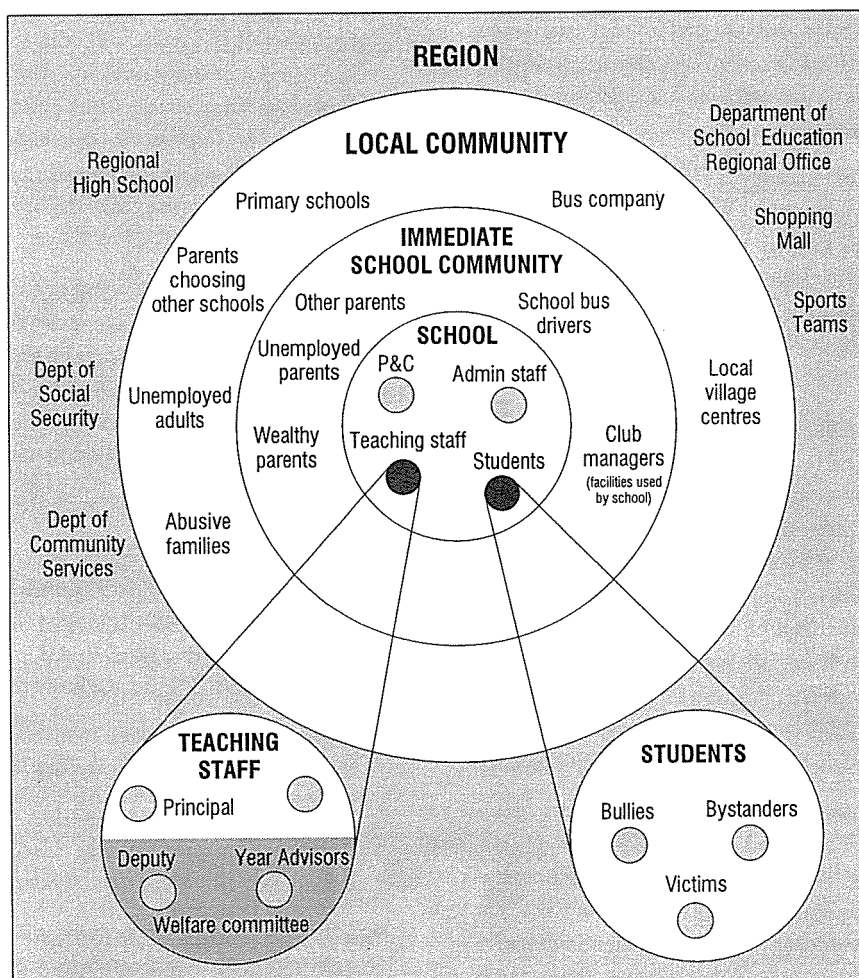

FIGURE 1: THE SCHOOL AS A SYSTEM

their children on the bus to the other high school in the regional centre.

There are restricted job opportunities in the local district and many people depend on social security. The area is well known as having high rates of domestic violence and drug and alcohol use.

The facilities in the area are extremely limited. The major form of community activity (apart from fishing) revolves around 'having a drink and playing the pokies in the clubs'. The regional centre is over 30 minutes drive away, or a $10-plus bus ride – expensive for those on social security benefits

Analysis of the School and Community System

The nature of the overall system inevitably has an effect on student behaviour. What sense can be made of the effect of system characteristics on the high level of bullying at the school?

Invasion of Physical Space

There is clearly little respect for individual space. This is apparent in the overcrowding and jostling on the buses where students are forced into close proximity for up to an hour, prior to entering the formal learning environment. Securing a good seat is obviously desirable and in the absence of sophisticated negotiation skills a pecking order develops to share out this limited resource. Overcrowding is a significant stress factor in social institutions (jails, refugee camps, schools and housing estates).

The high level of domestic violence in the community has the effect of modelling:

❖ the physical invasion of personal space by the perpetrators of violence;

❖ some tolerance of physical aggression as this is the way things are – the strong dominate the weak;

❖ and the readiness to use abusive behaviour as a way of solving problems.

All of these are characteristic of bullying. Those who can take space and defend it, gain status. There is an acceptance of intimidation and aggression.

Passing the Buck

> From these behaviours we can see that one underlying world view in this system is 'in order to gain recognition and status it is necessary to force others to give me what I want'.

No one seems to be able to do anything about the bus situation. There is a stand-off. The school cannot force the bus drivers to take action. The students are relatively powerless to improve their situation and have to put up with it. When challenged, the response of the bus company is to pass the buck to the school.

The school is open to getting in an outsider to assist with the bullying issue, although one possibility is that the buck will be passed to the outside expert. The school has plans to stagger the starting time for the senior students (Years 11 and 12) next year, so they have a separate bus run and as a consequence bus travel should be less crowded. But for the moment at least, the situation is stuck.

The dynamic of avoiding the responsibility for taking action and blaming others is a characteristic response from bullies or bystanders when confronted with their behaviour. This is displayed by the group of parents critical of the school for not taking tougher action to prevent bullying, yet unwilling to be involved in the Parents and Citizens (P & C) Association. It is also present in staff critical of the Head for not getting tougher on discipline.

Blaming others is an extremely common tactic for avoiding the consequences of one's own behaviour. It is typically found in systems involved in managing 'problem' behaviour, particularly aggression in boys. For example, a

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teacher may blame a student for provoking a power struggle; the student blames the teacher for belittling him. Each is closed in the way he perceives the other. Shifting this perception means developing new roles in relation to each other. When the role of blaming is overdeveloped, this becomes problematic when the person's preferred identity rests on maintaining that he is not responsible for the conflict and therefore doesn't have to change his behaviour. The rebel and the enforcer of discipline both maintain the closed system.

Life in the War Zone

Life is focused on survival. In the community there is a significant sub-group living on benefits and presumably dealing with boredom, frustration, inability to be a breadwinner, the stresses of parenting and a lack of money. One commonly modelled way of dealing with these stresses and life issues in this community is to 'get away from it all' by solitary beach fishing or by escape into alcohol and gambling. Another alternative is to lash out.

Individuals develop a sense of powerlessness when they are repeatedly exposed to a bully or a more dominant force. This tends to drive people into groups for safety. Predictably, the students move around the school in small cliques and gangs. Little sense of school spirit or cohesion as a school community is to be expected. The feeling that 'we as a community don't count' is reinforced by lack of community facilities, isolation from the regional centre and chronic unemployment in the area.

In a system where people feel they don't count, the search for some kind of personal power (a sense of worth) becomes more urgent. In the community, this shows up in the level of domestic violence, the clan-like village loyalty and, in the school, a high level of bullying and harassment.

Some students describe school as a prison and wish to escape. To them, school represents a loss of freedom, an institution where they 'do time' and they resent being told what to do. There is a corresponding

group of teachers concerned with enforcing discipline, in the complementary role of warder to the prison inmate. Unfortunately this supports the system of dominance inherent in bullying. These groups are locked into a power struggle and are closed to seeing the situation differently.

Interestingly, there are other links between sub-groups of staff and students. The bored, switched-off students going through the motions of learning have similarities to the teachers who have given up fighting to control students – teachers who have used the same teaching style for years and are looking for the least troublesome way of surviving until transfer or retirement. Both sub-groups are serving time and are mostly closed to new learning.

In contrast there are students who actually want to solve problems and will try new things. The corresponding group of teachers is prepared to experiment with different classroom management and teaching methods. These groups are open to learning.

Groups and Sub-groups within the School Community

Students

Although there are no students at the school when I visit, they have a strong presence as the focus of attention for parents and staff – their behaviour and welfare is the reason for the staff development activities.

Parents

I speak to fifteen people at the Parent Night which takes up the first hour of the P & C meeting. While an invitation to all parents would have been made, the placement of the talk within the Parents and Citizens (P&C)

meeting has probably discouraged some parents. The Head and the Special Projects Teacher both attend and I notice the P&C group are quite supportive of them.

The P&C group are very interested in the issue of bullying and in the results of the student survey. They ask a number of questions about managing bullying behaviour. The chairman runs the meeting tightly. I later witness the same determination in the Head steering the meeting of the student welfare committee where he wants it to go.

None of the hardline parents are present at the meeting. They are seen by the parents attending as part of the problem, as the hardline solution relies on increased punishment, effectively 'bullying the bully'. This split is echoed by the teaching staff when I meet with them.

The P&C sub-group of parents is open to information from an outside expert but is effectively closed to the involvement of critical hardline parents.

I suspect that a wider parent night has not been called because they wanted to vet what I have to say in case it gives ammunition to the opposing sub-group of parents.

The underlying belief in the P&C sub-group of parents is that the community does not sufficiently appreciate the work that is being done in the school; that this perception is wrong, and it must be addressed.

The P&C group's key action so far is to have set up a committee to develop and present a more positive image of the school to the community. I suggest that rather than marketing the school, it would be more productive to set up an anti-bullying committee to directly work on the bullying problem. I give an example of a Bully Busters program at another school which has formed a committee of staff, students and parents. Over 12 months it raised student and community awareness to the point where they have agreed they want it to stop. Without student agreement, I argue, nothing will change.

The suggestion is met with apparent interest but I do not get a sense the P&C will drive such a program. I think they would support whatever the school decides to do. In effect, these parents accept that those in charge of the school know best what the school needs and this is not to be challenged. In my view, this attitude undermines the potential value of the committee to the school.

> The P&C parents are open to techniques of marketing and aware of the need to get certain information out but are closed to ideas that mean they will lose control of any initiative.

Teachers

Sub-groups among staff appear to form around two criteria: personal willingness to change classroom management methods; and a demand that the Head enforce a punitive school discipline system.

A) WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT METHODS

All the staff are generally fed up with the level of harassment and power struggles in class. I point out that teachers (and parents) also model bullying to control students. We spend some time on the difference between punishment and discipline based on logical consequence. Logical consequences are known in advance, not excessive to the offence and are not administered vindictively or to intimidate or humiliate. Any logical consequence can be made punitive by being unexpected, excessive or vindictive (McFadden 1996).

My sense is that the staff are open to this as an idea. Most school cultures pay lip service to the need for improved classroom management skills but little is done. Most teachers work in effective isolation. Taking punishment out of classroom discipline and cleaning up behaviour management techniques requires teachers to examine and make adjustments to their own behaviour. This involves the intensely personal realm of how they see themselves as teachers and the possibility of challenging their lived identity as a classroom practitioner.

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> *As a group, staff are open to hearing ideas about limiting harassing and bullying behaviour in students, as long as it does not threaten their identity.*

My impression is that only a small sub-group of teachers is open to deeper self-reflection. I can see that the extra work involved will have to pay off in terms of increased teacher satisfaction and classroom outcomes.

The sub-group that is open to experimenting with classroom management holds strongly to the identity of a teacher as someone who generates learning outcomes.

In my experience there is always a (second) sub-group of teachers who are traditional (autocratic) in their classroom control techniques and unwilling to change their ways. School management has little direct control over classroom management and teachers value their autonomy in the classroom highly. During the day, a number of male teachers tell me how they need to be quite strict with students and that this works well.

I have been alerted to a (third) sub-group of teachers who, like some parents, want a tougher system of punishment. These two sub-groups are closed to challenging their identity but are open to learning how to improve the effectiveness of what they were already doing.

Sub-groups that are closed to changes in their classroom management techniques hold primarily to the identity of teacher as someone who maintains control.

b) Punitive school discipline system

During the day I become aware of a fundament disagreement in the school about the need for a return to a 'levels system' of school discipline. Under such a system, a student at Level 1 might be warned that if their behaviour deteriorates they will be sent to the Head Teacher. At Level 2 they may get put on a conduct card to be signed by a teacher after each lesson, and cannot go on excursions. At Level 3, parents are informed and they spend all non-class time in detention. Level 4 involves suspension.

A (fourth) sub-group, including Head Teachers, feel the lack of a clear level system makes it impossible to get any consistency in consequences for misbehaviour. If they send a student to the Head they can not be sure that the student will be punished. This undermines the whole system of behaviour management in the school. If the rules are being broken 'we must get tougher'. It is perceived that students are able to manipulate the system and these staff want it tightened up. This sub-group is closed to the Head's view that each case has to be dealt
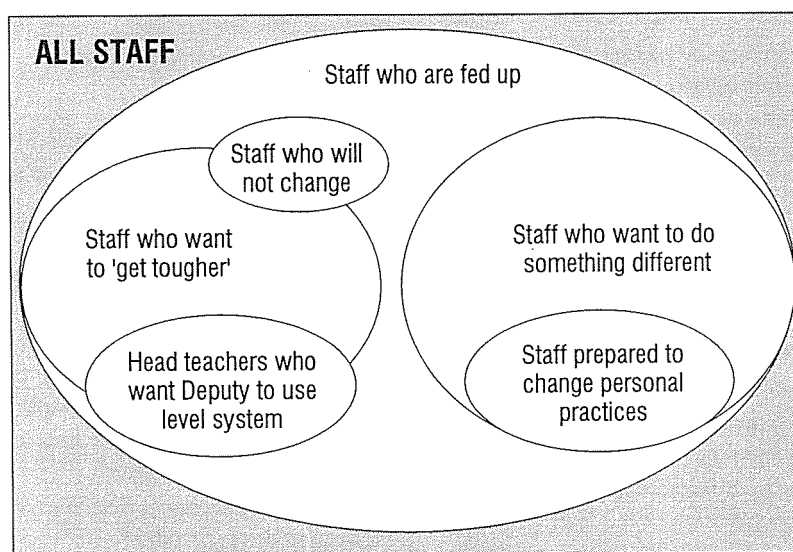

FIGURE 2: SUB-GROUPS EVIDENT AT TEACHER IN-SERVICE TRAINING

ALL STAFF

Staff who are fed up

Staff who will not change

Staff who want to 'get tougher'

Staff who want to do something different

Head teachers who want Deputy to use level system

Staff prepared to change personal practices

with on its merits and that a rule-based application of consequences is inappropriate.

The underlying belief of this fourth sub-group of staff is that consistency of punishment is essential in controlling student behaviour.

The Head does not believe in such a system and treats each student according to need. He believes that standard punishments are not effective and that it is necessary to engage the student in choosing different behaviour. Some staff (fifth sub-group) agree with him and are open to moving to a less traditional discipline structure.

The difference between these last two sub-groups repeats the division between those parents of supportive of and those critical of the Head. I begin to suspect that one reason I have been invited to the school is to soften up the 'tougher rules' sub-group of staff into accepting non-punitive initiatives.

The Student Welfare Group

I meet with a group of 12 teachers including all Year Advisers, the Head and the Teacher Special Projects to examine the welfare structure of the school.

The group is upbeat; hopeful that something can change. They are action-focused and want something they could do immediately that will make a difference. There is a sense that perhaps someone will guide them out of the wilderness. They are open to suggestions that fit their collective picture of the situation. They are open to hearing from me, an external consultant, who basically supports them in their work. They are closed to parents critical of the welfare/discipline system in the school and of their role in it.

As I had at the P&C meeting, I suggest that bullying will not change until the students want it to change. Therefore the teachers have to involve the students, and preferably parents, in the process. It is suggested that the school community:

❖ define bulling in simple terms that all members of the system can understand and support

❖ develop an effective way to deal with reported bullying

❖ focus the intervention on the best outcome for all involved, not just the victim.

> *The group is initially closed to the idea of including the wider community as it means less control over the program. It means possibly working with parents highly critical of the school and its behaviour management policies.*

Doing this will mean giving up the notion that they as teachers are autonomous and have sufficient power to make effective changes without involving students or parents. Involving others means a longer process, more work and less certainty about the results. After some thought, the group do accept the need to involve the wider community. One possible explanation is that the group warms up to their wider identity as welfare managers rather than as front-line welfare agents.

The Welfare group is prepared to work out an improved welfare/discipline structure but is divided about the effectiveness of the current system for dealing with bullying incidents. The Head is adamant that the discipline system works. No one challenges him on this point, after all, he is responsible for discipline in the school.

The role of the Head is significant. He is closed to the idea that his plan isn't up to the task. This directly threatens his identity as a leader. However, he is open to the idea that the school community does not perceive or value the effectiveness of the existing discipline system. This maintains his identity (self-perceived) as 'the prophet of light' in a troubled system. As well, his task matches that of the P&C in seeking to lift the image of the school.

Once the Head indicates his willingness to accept the idea of involving the wider community, the welfare group becomes open to the idea of extending their operations.

The meeting becomes more task focused. Action is planned to:

❖ include students in doing something about the bullying culture at the school;

❖ create an anti-bullying committee including parents and students; and

❖ find ways to raise community perceptions of the effectiveness of the current discipline.

Analysis

Clearly elements within the school system are open in some ways and closed in others at the same time. This is reflected in the behaviours of the various sub-groups. The P&C parents, the school staff as a body and the welfare team were open to ideas from an outsider that are in line with their concerns about the school. They are all disappointed that enrolments are down and want to make changes. This attitude of openness reinforces the roles they see themselves in: hardworking caregivers, considerate practitioners and effective organisers of learning.

On the other hand, the P&C parents are closed to the critical ideas of 'hardline' parents. The Head and some teachers also hold this position. A sub-group of 'get tough' teachers are closed to the Head's ideas on discipline. The staff as a whole are not ready to examine their own classroom practices as teachers and a sub-group will always remain

closed to this. These attitudes support their existing identities as effective teachers who do not need to reconsider their own management styles.

> *Over the time of the discussions and seminars, several changes are noticeable. The Welfare group, initially closed to the idea of involving the wider community (especially the students), accept the value of raising community and student awareness and relinquishing, somewhat, control of the anti-bullying campaign.*

This is assisted by the strong action focus of the welfare teachers, one of whom had students ready to perform a sketch at a school assembly. Their identity is predominantly one of action-focused student mentors.

The whole staff group also listen intently to the description of non-punitive discipline systems. Despite the friction over the school discipline structures, there is no repudiation of the non-punitive concept. I put this down to the linking of non-punitive measures to the fundamental purpose of schools and the primary task of teachers: minimising student misbehaviour so the learning purpose of the school can be met.
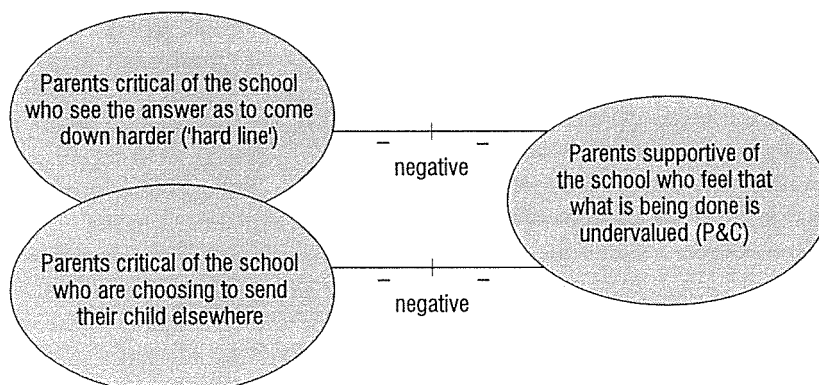

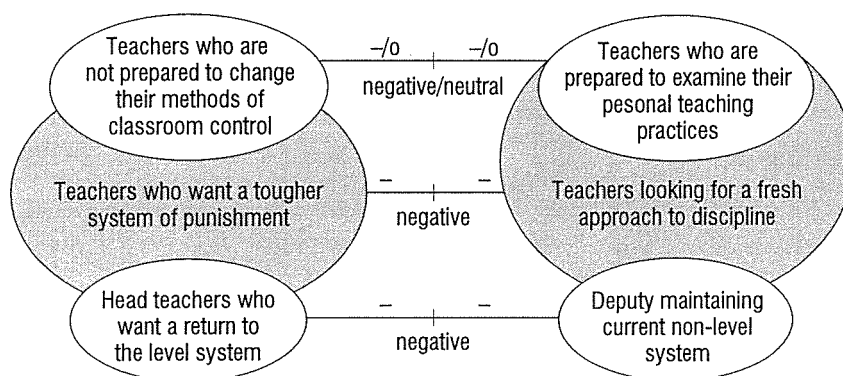FIGURE 3: PARENT SUB-GROUPS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE ISSUE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

FIGURE 4: TEACHER SUB-GROUPS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE ISSUE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Themes

Authority and Dependency

There are a number of themes being expressed throughout the school community. Fundamental is the notion of who's in charge and how they use their authority. This issue is seen in the struggle for control of parents over their children, of spouses over their partners, of unemployed people over their lives, of the Head over teachers, of teachers over students and of students over each other.

When the normal methods of control (simple request, pointing out of reasonable consequences) begin to fail, the traditional response of getting tougher is used. The need to maintain control leads to an escalation of punishment (domestic violence, bullying, the call for tougher rules, the de facto exclusion of disaffected parents).

This goes hand in hand with blaming others or passing the buck for difficult and unresolved situations. This occurs with behaviour management on the school buses, with teachers frustrated at the lack of a Level system, with domestic violence perpetrators and bullies blaming victims for provoking them and for deserving it and even with unemployed people that have lost heart. This inevitably leads to negative or closed

relationships between elements in the system.

There is also dependency on an expert outsider to lead them out of the situation. This is reinforced by the cultural norm of accepting hierarchical leadership and of disaffected groups withdrawing and going silent. This includes refusal to challenge the Deputy in the student welfare group, critical parents not attending P&C meeting and less powerful spouses saying nothing for fear of conflict escalating.

Polarisation

A second theme is the split in each major school group over the issue of discipline.

Parents concerned about behaviour and academic performance at the school have formed at least three sub-groups. The relationship between those parents critical of the school and those supportive of the school is negative or closed, as shown in Figure 3 opposite.

Teachers form a number of sub-groups around the issue of discipline. The relationship between the two main clusters is closed or negative neutral as shown above in Figure 4.

The student welfare group is not in itself split although there were two identifiable sub-groups as shown below in Figure 5.
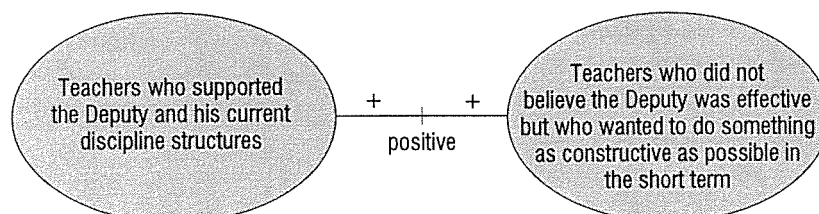

FIGURE 5: STUDENT WELFARE TEACHER SUB-GROUPS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP OVER THE ISSUE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The relationship between the student welfare sub-groups is positive and open. There is sufficient goodwill for them to find a course of action that satisfies both student welfare sub-groups. I believe this is because they are united in their distress at the existing bullying situation and are aware that they hold in common a clear purpose in seeking the best possible outcomes for the students.

Conclusion

It seems to me that any resolution of the situation will require that all key players be involved. In systems terms, the more elements of a system that can be gathered in decision-making, the greater the chance of an enabling solution. I saw the following views displayed:

❖ The school as a whole sees the students as the client group who need intervention (and invite the outside expert in to fix them). At this stage there is no acceptance that staff would have to change their classroom management practices.

❖ The Head sees the perception of some parents and some staff as a difficulty and the incidence of bullying as a related issue.

❖ The P&C parents see some students and some parents as the problem

❖ The hardline parents see the teachers as the problem.

❖ The get-tough teachers see the Head as one problem and students as a related problem.

❖ Initially no group is particularly concerned with what the students think. This changes during the discussions, most noticeably in the student welfare group.

Each group takes a stance that is closed to learning from the people they have identified as the problem. Difficulty arises about whose view is 'correct', who is right and what should be done. In one sense there is no correct view. However, if each party is not involved in the solution they will undermine whatever course of action follows.

Each group's stance displays its identity and the values it identifies with its purpose. Each group is open to and easily accepts information it has already agreed with or which does not seriously challenge its values. Where information is threatening, the sub-groups are closed. For example, the Head is defending his discipline system.

Schools are complex, multi-layered communities, with multiple agendas, tensions and factions. In thinking systemically I become aware of a possible starting point for the next phase of change. If I were to work further with this school my first instinct would be to address the division in the sub-groups by creating a shared identity and purpose for the desired change. This has begun in the Student Welfare Committee – when the larger purpose of improved welfare outcomes was brought out, relations between two sub-groups became more positive.

Establishing a vision for desired change across the entire school community at one level will not be hard. There is general agreement that the level of bullying is too high and the realisation that parents are enrolling their children elsewhere.

However, if sub-group relations are left unaddressed old dynamics between the groups may reassert themselves. Sub-groups need to become more aware of their roles, mutual concerns and how they are open and closed to learning from each other. Before the system can really be open to new input and unify around an overarching vision, sub-group relations must be recognised and addressed. This is the challenge facing the management group.

As I leave the school I am left with the impression of the difficulty of working within such day-to-day tension. The students arrive back tomorrow and the whole system gets re-enacted all over again. I begin reviewing my experience in their system to see if I can make some sense of it. I later offer to work further with the school but there is no follow-up.

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Building a Student Support System Using Sociometry

by Peter McKimmie

Peter McKimmie is the head of the Health and Physical Education faculty at a senior high school in Western Australia. He has been teaching in educational systems for many years and integrating the theory and practice of sociometry, sociodrama and psychodrama in schools. He has been one of the initiators of action methods in schools in Australia, and founded the organisation Parent Education Australia. Peter became a sociodramatist in 1980 and has been a member of ANZPA since its formation 20 years ago.

The Head of the English Faculty at a Senior High School contacts me for advice about setting up an effective student support system in his school. His fellow school management committee members have had experiences of ineffective student support systems and he wants to create something that will work.

I think about his proposal for some time and came up with a support system based on sociometric principles. He likes the idea and invites me to speak to all the Senior High School's eighty teachers about the support system. They vote to accept the proposal.

I am given a period of two weeks – ten teaching days – to develop a student support system in the Senior High School. The school has a population of 1400 students ranging from thirteen to eighteen years of age.

My first job is to timetable opportunities to meet with each class in the school for a forty minutes school period. Fortunately for me, the Head of the English faculty helps. Every time English classes are timetabled, I am able to conduct a session for one period. This way I came in contact with every student in the school, the whole fourteen hundred. It takes me a week to work through all the classes.

Class Sociometry Sessions

When the students came into the room, I introduce myself and ask them to move the desks aside and sit on their chairs in a circle. It is a lot of fun just getting the class to make a circle rather than the usual rectangle or triangle. I warm the group up with activities such as – 'Can anyone name everyone here?' and 'When I say go, you must leave your chair, sit next to someone different and introduce yourself as though you have never met them before'.

After the initial warm-up we move into action. I place an empty chair next to me and say, 'I need a volunteer to sit on this chair. Who will come out?' Someone eventually comes out and I tell them that they have just won $10 000 000 and can go anywhere in the world for a holiday. After they pick their destination, I ask, 'Who will you take with

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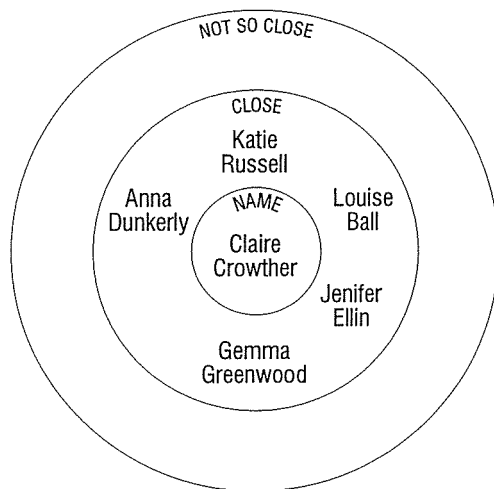
Name: Claire Crowther
Form: B12

1. Katie Russell	5
2. Louise Ball	4
3. Jennifer Ellin	3
4. Gemma Greenwood	2
5. Anna Dunkerly	1

* First chosen
✓ 5 points
✓
✓
✓
✓

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF SOCIOMETRIC KEY

you? You can only take three people and they must be from this class'. When they have picked three students I ask 'Why did you pick them?' I also ask the students who are chosen 'How did you feel about being picked?'

My aim is to warm the students up to making choices and hopefully appropriate choices based on selection criteria. After working with three different students over different choices I introduce the class to the choice which is at the foundation of the student support system. 'Which student would you chose to speak to in this school, if you had a problem?'

Each student in the class is given a sheet of card called a Sociometric Key as shown above.

They are each invited to write down the names of five students they feel they could talk to if they had a problem, in order from first to fifth choice. Then they write their own name in the small circle in the centre and the names of the students they have chosen showing how close they feel to them.

I carry out exactly the same format with each class until I have seen all 1400 students.

Teachers have the option of staying with their class or having a free period.

Most teachers stay with their class for the forty minutes and speak to me informally

about the class and the students. It is probably helpful learning for them to be an observer of the class dynamics, without the pressure of being the teacher. Some teachers make appointments to see me on a more formal ongoing basis.

Collating the Results

After collecting all the data from the students, it is time to set up the system. I manage to co-opt some volunteer parents who come to the school to help me do the analysis. I set out a large sheet of paper near the staffroom, visible to all the teachers, with the students' names in the following format (Figure 2).

Reading from the Sociometric Key forms completed by the students, the results are tabulated by hand by the parents under my supervision.

What emerges from these results are incred-

KIDS IN SUPPORT SYSTEM: McKIMMIE METHOD														
Form	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
8.1	Adams Mary	5	5	5	5	3	2	3	3	4	4	1	2	42
8.1	Adeer Tom	1	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
8.1	Asan Joan		4	4	3	2	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	19
8.1	Ateane Ian	2	2	5	5	4	4	1	1	1	-	-	-	25
8.1														

FIGURE 2: COLLATION SHEET

ible sociometric strands weaving through the school system interlocking all the students.

I want to identify the Sociometric Stars selected by each Year group from Year 8 to Year 12. These are the students most selected by other students as those they would chose to speak to if they had a problem. In the diagram below Mary is the Sociometric Star.
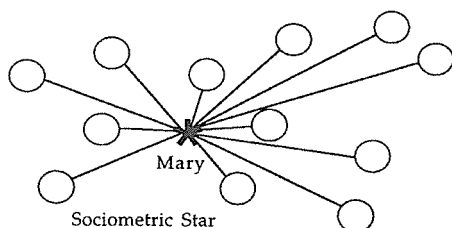

FIGURE 3: SOCIOGRAM

The next step is to select the Sociometric Stars from each Year group from the whole school sociogram. I decide to select the three most chosen from each year group. This makes a group of fifteen Sociometric Stars – three each from Year 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. In the school support system every student will be linked up to one of these Sociometric Stars.

All information and results are easily available to all staff. I encourage them to talk to me about the student support system. The staff seem very interested and most think that the students chosen are the ones they would have chosen.

YEAR	SCHOOL SYSTEM
8	Sociometric Star
9	
10	

FIGURE 4: SOCIOMETRIC STARS BY YEAR

Session with Student Sociometric Stars

The next step of the process is to have a meeting with the student Sociometric Stars. This is an incredible meeting.

The students sit quietly, smiling and listening. I can see why they were chosen – they are great listeners. I tell them why they were chosen, show them the results and ask them

if they want to continue as Sociometric Stars in the support system. They all agree to take part.

I now warm the student stars up to making choices, and to eventually make a choice on a new criterion. 'Which teacher would you choose to speak to, in this school, if you had a problem?'

Once again, the information is collected and analysed and the staff Sociometric Stars are obtained. I decide to keep the number of staff stars at ten. I have a meeting with the staff who are selected and tell them how they have been chosen. I ask them whether they want to continue as staff Sociometric Stars in the student support system, and they agree to. So now the school system is starting to look like this:
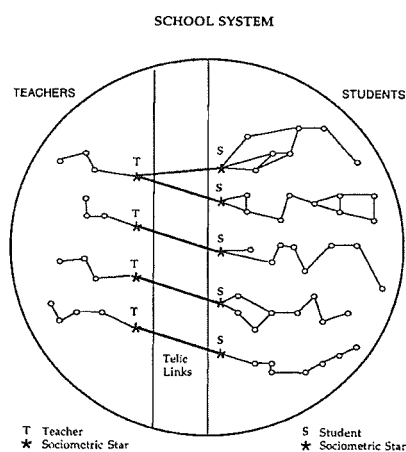
SCHOOL SYSTEM

FIGURE 5: SCHOOL SYSTEM

Now the process is starting to identify telic links across the system from students to teachers. I consider this will counteract the 'them' and 'us' attitude between students and teachers. I also think it will lessen the power of peer pressure because each student Sociometric Star will link other students with Sociometric Star teachers. These teachers can be a strong influence amongst other teachers and on committees.

The next step in the formation of the student support system is to strengthen the telic links between the Sociometric Stars. I decide to do this using role training. I conduct a number of meetings of the student and teacher

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Sociometric Stars and work with them as a group to develop three roles – speaker, listener and observer.

These students and teachers already have well developed listening roles. They need to develop these further – becoming skilled at passive and active listening, giving effective 'I' messages and developing their doubling expertise.

Outcomes

So how does it work? Well, the support system once activated is working away informally all the time. Every time a Sociometric Star teacher meets one of the students who chose them, they speak together and their relationship increases. The student Sociometric Star's social atom has now expanded to include a teacher and as these telic links strengthen, students at the very extremity of the system can be drawn closer.

The student support system keeps working away day by day informally with people talking, listening, observing. Every now and then a formal meeting of the teacher and student Sociometric Stars is held. I hold one of these formal meetings while I am at the school to create a credo or mission statement for the support system. After much discussion, brainstorming and action, the group comes up with three important aims:

LISTEN

LISTEN

LISTEN

So as I came to the end of my work at this senior high school I think how lucky I am to have been given the time and the freedom to work with a whole school system using sociometry. I think of the words of Antoine de Saint-Excipery:

'A rock pile ceases to be rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.' And for me, a school system ceases to be 'a school system' the moment a Sociodramatist contemplates it, bearing within him the image of the evolution of the creator.

for me, a school system ceases to be 'a school system' the moment a Sociodramatist contemplates it, bearing within him the image of the evolution of the creator

Domestic Violence Groups for Women

by Joan Daniels and Patricia Smith

Joan Daniels is a therapist and trainer. She is a staff member of the Wellington Psychodrama Training Institute and has completed her practical assessment in psychodrama. Patricia Smith is a therapist, trainer and advanced psychodrama trainee.

Both Joan and Patricia live and work in Palmerston North. They share a common interest in working with trauma in group settings and for the past five years have been running programs for women affected by domestic violence.

The Context

Domestic violence is a major social problem in New Zealand affecting all members of the family group. It is physically and psychologically damaging. The effects can be wide ranging and extend from one generation to the next. It has been described as a 'monstrous dysfunction that tears at the underbelly of our community. (Mahoney 1997). It has a deep affect on our community, striking at the core of the nation's well being.

Domestic violence is certainly not a new phenomenon. What is beginning to shift is society's view, with a growing intolerance towards it. The idea that what goes on in the home is a private affair is slowly being laid to rest.

In New Zealand there have been significant changes in the approach taken by the court, the police and other government departments and ministries. On billboards outside police stations and emblazoned over public transport, is the message in bold letters 'Family Violence is a Crime. Call for Help'!

A great deal of time has been devoted to developing a better understanding of domestic violence. One outcome has been a change in the law. The *Domestic Violence Act 1995* adopts a more systemic approach to domestic violence, redefining 'domestic relationships' to include not only intimate partners and children, but extended family and close personal relationships, including same-sex relationships.

Until recently, the offender involved in domestic violence was the only party to receive assistance. Now there is agreement (at least in principle) that all of those affected by domestic violence should have access to assistance. Provision of service delivery has been widened. Programs designed to assist women and children affected by domestic violence, as well as those provided for the offender, are legislated for and are slowly being adopted. This development widens the range of therapeutic interventions possible. When this opportunity arose we welcomed the chance to be involved as part of a more systemic approach.

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The Program

We have designed and conducted a number of group work programs for women who have experienced domestic violence. At an initial assessment interview we determine each woman's readiness and willingness to work in a group. For a small number of women an individual program is indicated. Participants in the group work program attend eight weekly three-hour sessions along with a one-day workshop, incorporating the third and fourth sessions. The one-day workshop assists the group to engage more fully with each other as they are together over a longer period.

Program Philosophy

Our program is based on the following ideas:

❖ Social roles are learned. Both women and men experience social and cultural constraints that keep them from developing to their full potential. There can be little doubt that women have been disadvantaged both economically and psychologically by their socialisation and stereotypes associated with the female role (Barnett and La Violette 1993).

❖ 'It is only when men's violent behaviour is absolutely framed as within their control and as their responsibility that women become free to commence their own healing and change process' (Shaw and Pye 1993).

❖ Women hold within themselves their own power. The program is about assisting them to access this and share it.

❖ 'Some of the most important work with battered women is the remaking of their belief systems' (Holimann and Schilit 1991).

❖ 'In the history of the collective, as in the history of the individual, everything depends on the development of consciousness' (Jung 1945).

❖ People change when they feel accepted. When they experience themselves within a culture of non-condemnation and non-blame, they are able to freely express themselves and move towards their potential.

❖ Trauma may trigger physiological changes in the brain which cause either high arousal or dissociative states. Perry (1996) It is vital to create a safe group context with participants in their lowest possible arousal state.

❖ Varvaro (1991) lists numerous losses encountered by battered women. These include loss of safety, everyday routine, their spouse, a father for their children, their possessions, trust, hopes and dreams.

Program Goals

It is intended that on completion of the program, participants are able to:

❖ Differentiate between violence and anger.

❖ Clarify their own socialisation regarding anger and violence.

❖ Develop awareness of their own behaviour when they are angry and their behaviour when anger is directed towards them.

❖ Understand community sub-groups' attitudes toward violence and where they stand in relation to these.

❖ Recognise tactics of power and control including those expressed in their own relationship dynamics.

❖ Realise what they are responsible for, what they are not responsible for and what they are able to change.

❖ Become aware of the range of coping strategies they have developed in response to abuse.

❖ Recognise how their coping behaviours expand and diminish their sense of self – and the effects of this on significant others, children and partners.

❖ Experience the grief arising from a number of losses they have had because of the effects of violence on their lives.

❖ Have a greater sense of self.

❖ Develop roles related to self-valuing, nurturing and protection.

❖ Reduce their sense of isolation in the world.

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Participants

Women who have experienced domestic violence are typically socially isolated, have low self-esteem and little ability to value and nurture themselves, or to hold a boundary. Often they have lived for years in a state of fear, and are highly traumatised. Participating in a group can be a frightening prospect. Initially we provide a high level of structure as we work to create relationships within the group. This creates a sense of safety and lessens isolation.

Methods

Court funding requires that the program be educational. We believe that all learning occurs within relationship, so each session has components of experiential learning, direct teaching and facilitated group work. Facilitated group work and sociometry are our primary methods for building relationships within the group.

We use role theory to conceptualise both the sociodramatic and the psychodramatic aspects of domestic violence. Mirroring, doubling, concretisation, sociograms and vignettes all assist us to work with women's individual role systems, their family relationships and their relationships within the community and society.

As in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecology model, we focus on the developing person, their internal system, their family relationships, the community and the culture, and the evolving interaction between these linked systems. This is conceived as a nest of structures, each inside the next like a set of Russian dolls.
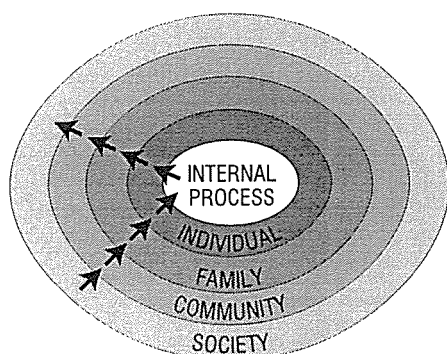

FIGURE 1: THE NEST OF STRUCTURES

Case Study One: Janine

Janine's mother, who was herself beaten both as a child and as an adult by her partner, was very violent to Janine. In her own relationship with her partner Janine was very verbally abusive, becoming helplessly raging and chaotically confused in her thinking. At other times she was a passive mouse and an icy distancer. She also had well-developed coping roles of self-effacing martyr and invisible mute.

Janine responds well to action methods. Concretising and role reversing within her family system enables her to be clear-thinking and understand the role relationships she has learned. When her experiences and those of her partner and children are concretised and mirrored to her, she understands for the first time the meanings she has made of the abuse she suffered in her childhood.

She has believed she is a bad person and that it is dangerous for her to express herself. Only able to do this when out of control, acting from her affect without thinking, Janine has been very abusive herself. Chaos has come to be seen as normal in a life where nothing can be trusted, including herself.

From this point Janine is able to begin developing a relationship with her self that is accepting and appreciative of her choices. She is now able to use roles she previously accessed only in relationship to others – her friends and children – in the service of her self. She begins to develop a self protector, a self valuer, a boundary keeper and a clear focuser. She begins to like and value her self.

Case Study Two: Teresa

Some of the traits most valued in women in their family and the wider culture, such as commitment and tolerance, may work against women in abusive relationships. Many battered women who remain with their partners develop 'learned hopefulness'. The role of wishful dreamer becomes overdeveloped. They believe that if they only do this, or that, or just wait long enough, then everything will be alright. This behaviour and thinking protects them from both despair and fear of isolation.

Teresa is a Pacific Islands woman, reared in the Islands by her maternal grandparents. At age thirteen she was sent to New Zealand to live with her mother who enslaved her and sadistically violently abused her. Teresa ran away when she was sixteen and met her partner soon after this. She was determined it would be different for her children. Her family would stay together.

Adherence to this belief system kept her in an extremely abusive marriage for ten years. It also kept her from despair. She isolated herself, never mentioning to friends her own situation, while listening and advising her friends who were being beaten. She never acknowledged the number of times she spent in a Women's Refuge herself, physically and emotionally battered. Teresa believed she could make it work.

When she witnesses herself operating from this learned hopefulness in a non-judgemental group enactment, she is able to reach out and forgive herself. She is able to value something previously so shameful that she had cut it from her consciousness. Like Janine she begins to develop a cluster of roles associated with loving herself. She begins to adjust her belief system to accommodate forgiveness and compassion towards herself.

she isolated herself, never mentioning to friends her own situation, while listening and advising her friends who were being beaten

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Death by 1000 Banalities – Testing Spontaneity Theory in Mental Health

by Dr Kevin Franklin

Kevin Franklin is in private practice as a clinical psychologist and educator in Perth. He is a Psychodramatist and TEPIT and has recently helped form a regional association and a new ANZPA training centre in Western Australia. In this article he explores the link between spontaneity and Coming Out. Coming Out is a universal process of self-realisation – in which the real identity, the true nature is expressed. He contrasts this with a foreclosed identity dominated by social conserves – as a client describes it 'a death by 1000 banalities'. Kevin demonstrates a clear link between Coming Out and mental health.

It is a generally accepted psychodramatic principle that 'anxiety is the absence of spontaneity'. During my research into the origin and nature of heterosexuality and homosexuality, the opportunity arose for me to put Moreno's axiom to empirical test.

While I know psychodrama works from my own experience, I also value scientific proof. This reflects my interest in integrating science and religion.

Spontaneity

How did Dr J. L. Moreno discover spontaneity? He found experimentally that people in everyday situations were unable to take action, or act appropriately. An absence of action and an absence of appropriate action indicate an inability to engage free will (Latin, *sponte*).

In his experiments mirroring life itself participants often came to know how they might or could act.

He describes a spontaneity state as follows (1980, p. 83):

> The starting point was the state into which the subject threw himself for the purpose of expression. He threw himself into it at will. There was no past image guiding him, at least not consciously. There was no striving in him to repeat a past performance or to surpass it. He warmed up to a state of feeling often jerkily and inadequately. He showed a sense of relationship to people and things around him. After a few moments of tension came relaxation and pause, the anti-climax. We called this state the Spontaneity State.

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There are measurable degrees of approximation to a spontaneity state; low, medium and high. Moreno (1980, p. 247) devised the axiometric scale evaluating societal and cultural patterns. At one end of the scale were forms with a high degree of spontaneity with no conserve portion or a low degree of it; on the other end of the scale were forms with a high degree of conserve with no spontaneity, or a low degree of it. Most human activity occurs somewhere between these two poles. Following Moreno's axiom that 'anxiety is the absence of spontaneity' conserved behaviour associated with an absence of spontaneity should predict high anxiety.

The 'Coming Out' Scale

As a clinical psychologist, psychodramatist and gay man I see the relevance of this scale of spontaneity in the homosexual coming out process. Coming out is a term used by lesbians and gays to describe the process of openly identifying as a lesbian or gay to oneself and to other people. Coming out is part of a broad range of human experiences, sometimes mystical, called realisation. This refers to our knowing an answer to the prime identity question: Who am I? Developmentally, this begins a wholistic experience of life.

We can apply Moreno's axiometric scale to the process of coming out. At the low spontaneity end of the scale we see the closet gay dominated by conserved societal and cultural norms about sexuality – and at the high spontaneity end of the scale we see the openly out gay person, freer from restrictive norms, living with greater spontaneity.

Conserved notions of sexuality imply that everyone is or should be heterosexual, that it is the only valid form of sexual expression and that heterosexual (or straight) relationships are normal and superior. Homosexuality is then seen as a developmental failure to be heterosexual. This implies a moral imperative for gays and lesbians to not act sexually and to live an imposed celibacy. This conditioning or readying of the person to accept a false identity may foreclose on the real but neglected and even abused gay identity. This social pattern of neglect and abuse of the psychodramatic roles in a person has created a culture of conflict.

Accepting oneself as gay involves freeing the self from these oppressive assumptions and from a mistaken (ie co-dependent) identity.

The homosexual person easily finds themself in a profound personal and interpersonal conflict between two imperatives – the conserve and the free will. They can be caught in a conflict that prolongs their identity crisis, which may become labelled as mental illness – that is, conserved.

A gay man dominated by old cultural conserves about homosexuality can fail to live out his gayness and so experiences the anguish of a failing existence (anxiety). Living passively his false identity reinforces by associative learning his emptiness, boredom and despair (eg anaclitic depression). He may attempt to escape from these strictures of reality through, for example, workaholism, drugs, sexual-gluttony, mania, suicide or violence.

With a sudden loss of his socially created false identity (being outed or outing himself) and an inability to maintain his individuation (the emerging spontaneous self) there may be an unpleasant experience of disunity (eg de-realisation, de-personalisation, realisation psychosis). This may be temporary, intermittent or become more permanent (eg schizophrenia).

Understanding these Coming Out phenomena in a health and reality-based framework is important to the clinician. Coming Out & Outness is a universal individuation process that reflects Becoming & Being in religious language and Nurture & Nature in scientific language.

Testing the Spontaneity Axiom

During my research on the origins and nature of heterosexuality and homosexuality, the opportunity arose to put Moreno's axiom to empirical test, by comparing three groups differing in level of spontaneity state.

The data from homosexual male subjects was divided into three groups using a self-report scale of Homosexual Identity Formation (Cass, 1984). This scale expresses and objectifies the Coming Out process. It classifies six stages of homosexual identity formation with characteristic cognitive, affective and behavioural elements. The six stages were combined to form low, middle and high spontaneity state groups for the purpose of this analysis.

Discriminant analysis was the statistical technique used to identify the main factor associated in the data with different levels of spontaneity state.

Homophobia (IHP) was measured by the Index of Homophobia (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). Other variables shown here are from the SCL-90-R (Derogatis, 1983). Results are shown below.

Results and Conclusions

These results show a compelling trend – decreasing values of distress with increasing values of spontaneity.

Moreno predicted that the absence of spontaneity would predict psycho-pathology and socio-pathology in general, and specifically, that the absence of spontaneity predicts anxiety.

The trends on all variables demonstrate his general prediction. Also these results

specifically demonstrate that anxiety (as phobic anxiety, psychoticism and homophobia) is the discriminating factor associated with an absence of spontaneity.

Implications

I see two main implications arising from this empirical study.

Firstly, the obvious, that spontaneity is good for your health. Psychodramatists have in spontaneity a general explanation of mental illness and health. The origin and nature of health (and the link between low creative spontaneity and mental illness) has scientific proof.

From this can be proposed a resurrection of the unified self, an Outness from the tomb of spiritual death that is mental illness associated with the dominion of old conserves. To me this expresses the rising of a new unified human consciousness as we begin our third millennium.

A Case Study of Identity Synthesis: Advanced Coming Out

Over 40, Jack is a gay man who runs his own successful business. He stutters at times. Jack's main concern is his aloneness. He has a sense of failure and loneliness if he is not in a relationship. He is back in counselling because of a recently failed relationship. He remains concerned that he is attracted to and likes

Homosexual Male Groups	Low s (n = 20)	Middle s (n = 65)	High s (n = 39)
Variable			
Somatisation	65	43	38
Obsessive-Compulsive	85	82	59
Interpersonal Sensitivity	106	76	53
Depression	109	73	58
Anxiety	83	50	30
Hostility	53	41	30
Phobic Anxiety * (social phobia)	52	17	7
Paranoid Ideation	80	66	50
Psychoticism *	78	41	21
Global Severity Index (GSI)	83	57	41
Homophobia (IHP) *	59	45	42

* Statistically Significant

TABLE 1: Scores showing the link between spontaneity (s) and variables of psychological distress

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having sex with younger men. In today's session, his latest – Bill, in his late 20s – has given him the flick.

Jack is locked in battle with his introjected social conserves: automatic assumptions about loneliness and living that emulate the banal straight world culture he experienced while growing up.

Jack enjoys being left to his own devices; he is resourceful and exuberant, resisting the conserves to which many are bound. In the vitality of young men he sees that his own battle against identity foreclosure is not yet lost.

I put to Jack that he enjoys 'life in the fast lane'. In Jack's Megalomania normalis state of being he is a Superman, a Virtuoso-of-Life who is very successful in business (professional identity) and lifestyle (personal identity).

He is an exuberant Prince and what he says goes.

However, his recent partner Bill has said he wants a monogamous partnership. Jack warms up to uncertainty and to loss-of-Life via imagined death-by-1000-banalities. How can this alive, vibrant and exuberant man suppress himself into an imagined banal suburban lifestyle such as that modelled by his family? How can Superman package himself into a Clark Kent container acceptable to Lois Lane? Instead, he resists. Jack as Private Rebel automatically rails against his own ruthlessly imposed conformist world-view. Jack automatically gives up on the Universal Man, alias Bill. Temporarily.

He is railing against his automatic assumptions about monogamy. As a Prince he has sown his seed widely and with gay abandon. Now, the question is whether maturity is a closing down (eg becoming a tired old queen) or whether maturity is offering him something important such as real love, rather than merely lust.

Judged against cultural norms there is a 'surplus' of Jack. His containerisation of himself does him a damage far worse than his occasional stuttering. He warms to the

enabling view that he is attracted to young men not simplistically because they are 'chickens' (with his associated guilt) but because he is alive and he enjoys their freshness, their vitality and their exuberance. He doesn't find this in older men (whom he associates with identity foreclosure). To maintain his personal identity he needs auxiliaries with vitality. He emotionally associates this mirror externally with young men. There is in this man a growing awareness of a quiet, still and wise man within. The Prince is psychologically transforming into a King. The Prince and the King are becoming One.

We revisit the Jack and Bill separation. He realises that in his automatic assumptions around monogamy he has responded bumptiously, failing to maintain his connection with himself and the other. With assistance, Jack reconsiders how he could explore the issue of monogamy with Bill. He begins to create a differentiated vision of what a monogamous relationship with Bill could be like. I put to Jack that he needs to keep Coming Out in an experimental and collaborative way so that he might engage with Bill instead of reducing himself and Bill. With a twinkle in his eye he says he'd like to communicate much better. He's motivated to connect with the deeper creative levels of his personality, to practise improvisation in relationship (ie, spontaneity).

Integration

This man who occasionally stutters has an unresolved resistance to a cultural conserve. He lives comfortably with this remnant of his psychosomatic infancy. He unknowingly resists cultural conserves – 'his introjected social roles' – and so there is conflict (normalised psychological defence) in him and with others. His psychosocial conflict is prolonged by cultural norms that he has internalised as social roles. However, this man is increasingly able to be spontaneous, to be objective with himself and with others. He is more Out as a way of life, not as an ephemeral phenomenon, but as a state of being.

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this man is increasingly able to be spontaneous, to be objective with himself and with others

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Career Planning – A Psychodramatic Approach

by Vivienne Thomson

Viv Thomson works as a consultant with organisations, groups and individuals – including public and private-sector clients in New Zealand, Asia and Britain. She has developed psychodramatic approaches to recruiting and selecting staff, training needs analysis and career planning. Viv is a Sociodramatist and a TEPIT. She teaches in the Auckland Psychodrama Training Institute.

Good career planning is about claiming and designing a course or progress through life. It assumes that we have a choice about how to pass our time. It also assumes that we can select from a variety of jobs to suit our needs and wants and create the lifestyle we desire.

I believe that each person's identity stems from a central psychodramatic role which they crave to express in the world. Career planning is the process of identifying this central drive and finding a means of expressing it legitimately in a social setting. As many of us spend a significant amount of our lives at work, the setting for this expression is often through a job.

The work of a career counsellor is as a psychodrama director to the protagonist, where the focus of the drama is the person's passage through life.

I developed my approach to career planning as a result of influential experiences in my own career and the assimilation of psychodramatic theory. Clients report a high level of satisfaction with this approach and over 95 per cent achieve their desired outcomes.

Impetus for this Approach

The first event that influenced my approach to career planning was receiving advice from my father at age fourteen. He said, 'Find out what you enjoy doing and then find a way to get paid to do it'. This awakened in me a feeling of capability, potency and the possibility of satisfaction. My father instilled in me a valuing of life as an enjoyable and fulfilling experience requiring creative endeavour. From then on I was convinced that whatever work activity people were engaged in, it should be deeply and personally satisfying.

The second experience occurred during a public presentation on career planning. During this session the leader presented four categories of personality and asked a range of questions to determine which category best matched us individually. Then we were asked

a series of questions designed to ascertain our preferences, thereby assessing our suitability for particular careers by means of a numerical scale.

I liked problem-solving, analysis, and organisation. My numerical rating in these, combined with my personality type, indicated I was suitable for careers in firefighting, teaching and law enforcement. While these results may be true, I decided that this approach was shallow. It didn't take adequate account of my innate desires, and it boxed me in to a narrow range of options.

On the basis of these experiences, I felt there was value in conducting some research of my own into methods of determining one's career. This involved experimentation and exploration with a number of friends and colleagues who were interested and willing to partake in such a project.

An Expanded Notion of Career Planning

The potential of many individuals remains largely unrealised, given traditional perceptions of work, a limited role repertoire and low self-esteem. Typically career planning focuses on acquiring a particular job or getting the right complement of competencies to meet an organisation's need as advertised in the situations vacant.

To me such an approach misses the point. In my approach I assume that each person has a fundamental desire to feel worthwhile, to contribute to society and to satisfy their own particular creative urges. Moreno describes the catharsis which occurs when compatible professional roles enable an extension of one's private roles. Often these private roles are not recognised in traditional settings or cannot be achieved through following predetermined career legacies or logical pathways.

A psychodramatic approach to career planning opens up possibilities for an individual to express psychodramatic roles central to their personality.

I consider every individual as a creative being

who has a dream or vision for themself. If I am able to relate to a person and their dreams I may be able to assist them realise those dreams; not necessarily the achievement of a particular finished form but the purposeful pursuit of becoming. I can engage with a person warming up to their own self-development.

This approach relates to Moreno's vision that '...the spontaneous creative matrix can be made the central focus of man's world not only as the underlying source but on the very surface of his actual living'. (J. L. Moreno, *Psychodrama Vol 1*, 1977, p109.)

Premises of Career Planning

I use the following premises in my own approach to career planning:

❖ Given a choice, people will choose to use time in a manner that is personally satisfying to them.

❖ People are usually more interested in and become more highly skilled at doing what they enjoy.

❖ Being employed is highly valued in our society.

❖ The patterns of functioning that individuals learn early in their lives affect their future work options.

❖ Life patterns are established according to a person's values and these must be considered when making decisions about a career as they inevitably influence their lifestyle.

❖ People require outside stimuli to maintain the process of self-assessment and self-development and this may be provided through career planning.

❖ The career planning process primarily requires creative exploration without censure or limitation. A specific plan can be generated from the resulting general ideas.

❖ Planning provides a structure that encourages choice and supports choices that will enrich the individual's life, and thereby enhances the lives of others.

❖ Career planning is ongoing and requires periodic attention to confirm or change decisions made about a person's employment.

❖ Personal and professional development is enhanced by a person's ability to set realistic goals.

Structure of a Career Planning Session

Most approaches to career planning cover the following steps:

❖ Carrying out an audit of the person's skills

❖ Identifying their motivations, values and goals

❖ Describing their ideal job

❖ Completing an analysis of the gap between where they are and where they want to be

❖ Carrying out a job search.

In contrast to approaches that focus on securing the next job based on a skills audit, I regard career planning as an opportunity for social atom repair and spontaneity training. Typically I conduct a career planning session for about 2½ hours. It takes the form of an interview, often using concretisation and soliloquy, or enactment. The session is divided into four parts which focus on the past, present and future and return to the present.

In the first part we explore the patterning of the person's life so far. This identifies their resources (such as their experiences, qualifications, possessions, funds), their role development and their personal and social context which must be taken into account if the resulting career plan is to be workable.

In the second part we make an assessment of the person's present job to identify whether the job currently held, or a modification of it, is a viable option for the future. This assessment identifies overdeveloped and underdeveloped roles. It also focuses on their sociometric context at work.

If they experience a significant degree of satisfaction overall it may be possible to make minor adjustments to the person's current situation. However, if they experience major

areas of dissatisfaction, it is likely their job cannot be modified sufficiently to meet their needs.

The third part is a future projection undertaken without reference to the past or present situation. This requires the career counsellor to enter the client's world with complete subjectivity. There is no room for judgement, criticism or disbelief. The more specific a person can be, either in describing or enacting their desired situation, the more tangible and realistic the career plan becomes.

The technique of soliloquy is very effective in facilitating the client's expression of what is essential to them. I record verbatim as they set the scene of their dream life. Catharsis often occurs when they hear their soliloquy read back.

I record salient parts of the information presented in all phases of the interview. The client's picture of the future is then rigorously tested for its viability. This examination usually identifies specific actions required of the client which they then plan and undertake according to a schedule they set.

Such actions might include skills training, gaining qualifications, informing and including people with whom they have significant relationships, broadening their experience or acquiring specific possessions. I present them a challenge to test their resolve in applying themselves to achieving their plan. I tell them that everything they do should take them one step closer to realising their dream – and that if it doesn't, it is a distraction. I also insist they set a date for reviewing their career plan with someone they trust to confide in.

The fourth and final part shifts the focus back from future to current time. It requires the career consultant to bridge the worlds of subjectivity and objectivity. At this stage it is necessary for the career counsellor to reflect back to the client where they will require further information, guidance, or development. Also reflected are those aspects of their functioning which are well developed and adequate to achieve the desired outcome.

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Philosophical and Psychodramatic Principles Used

Each person's course or progress through life is very personal, directed by their essential being; it is a social expression of a centrally organising progressive psychodramatic role.

> I believe that a person suffers personality and health deterioration if they do not achieve a high level of compatibility between their professional and private roles, or where there is insufficient reciprocity in their work setting.

I have seen this many times in clients as they develop illnesses. Some literally becoming diminished, their bodies unable to provide support in response to the internal discord they experience at work.

Each individual has a dream, largely unspoken and unrevealed, of who they are and how they wish to exist in the world. To warm up to this, the person must experience themself free from the constraints of their past and present circumstance. At this point the career counsellor is the preparatory agent, assisting the client to become acquainted with their innermost self.

The aim in working psychodramatically is expansion in the degree of freedom a person experiences at work. Often, simply naming the person's central psychodramatic role provides a source of self-belief and esteem that strengthens their commitment and will to create or pursue their dream.

Career planning is not about creating a fantasy world. A psychodramatic approach requires examination of the person's social and cultural atom, analysis of their role repertoire, sociometry and situation. The career counsellor must relate to the client's progressive role system and role clusters to identify a central role from which stems a potential professional identity.

Most clients come already warmed up to action. The effect of the career counselling is to make their dream more concrete. It anchors the dream in a set of achievable actions that will prepare them for the enactment that is to come.

In the process of realising their dream, the client inevitably comes up against obstacles in themself. They may require role training or spontaneity training. They may need to establish relationships or put themself in different contexts in order to develop their functioning and readiness.

In Summary

Using a psychodramatic approach to career planning enables the career counsellor an expanded view of the client and their desire for self-expression in the world. The career planning session serves as a warm-up for the client's enactment of a central progressive psychodramatic role and assists in identifying suitable contexts in which this may occur. The work of the career counsellor is as auxiliary and therapeutic guide to the client and can be highly successful as a means for achieving the client's desired outcome.

My experience of this approach is that it is liberating and that it is a profound experience for both client and counsellor. I liken it to the experience of being doubled – in which the protagonist feels validated at the deepest level – and in which the auxiliary broadens their experience in a way that is uplifting and inspiring.

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Book review

by Liz Marks

Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama

By Peter Felix Kellerman

I found this book a challenging, well-written and thought-provoking read. The introduction provides a useful overview of the chapters.

After an initial chapter defining psychodrama, the second chapter entitled 'Theory' is 'an attempt to develop a solid foundation upon which psychodrama techniques can be properly based'. This was originally published as a journal paper. I found it disappointing, concluding that it more truly lived up to its original title: 'An Essay on the Metascience of

Psychodrama'. To my mind a solid theoretical foundation would discuss Moreno's theories, perhaps comparing and contrasting them with other related or relevant theories. This was not the case. There was no discussion of role theory or any of Moreno's theory of child development, for example.

The next two chapters describe professional roles of Psychodramatists and skills needed by them, and the influence of charismatic leadership on the process of psychodrama.

It is only in the fifth chapter that Kellermann finally presents 'a model for understanding the therapeutic aspects of psychodrama'. This is central, providing a rationale and overview for the subsequent chapters. I would have warmed up to this book more readily if I had turned to the fifth chapter immediately after reading the introduction.

This chapter presents research literature on therapeutic aspects of group psychotherapy. There is also some discussion of what different schools of psychotherapy regard as the most effective factors in their therapy. The author sets out what he regards as the main therapeutic aspects in psychodrama, linking his conclusions with the research literature. I found this promoted my thinking regarding therapeutic factors in psychodrama. Subsequent writing addresses each therapeutic aspect in turn. There are
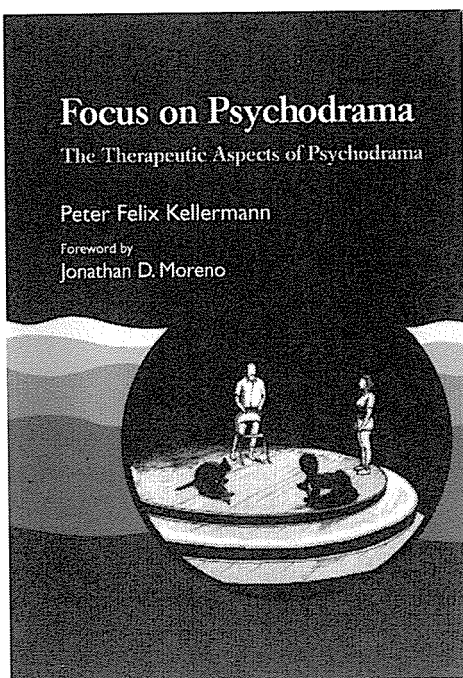
chapters on catharsis, action-insight, tele, as-if, acting out and magic.

In the introduction, Kellermann describes this book as 'an attempt to present a systematic analysis of the essential therapeutic ingredients in psychodrama' (p13). The title of the book and this description of it strongly influenced my initial warm-up. I hoped for a book that would focus immediately on the therapeutic aspects of psychodrama in an organised fashion. Instead, many chapters are revised versions of previously published journal articles, interspersed with new material and a summary of the author's doctoral thesis. Perhaps as a result, the focus on 'therapeutic aspects of psychodrama' appears in some chapters as a loosely woven thread, an afterthought to an already completed tapestry.

This book is written from a broad knowledge base and I found much of it interesting. However, I was not always in agreement with what was presented. Consequently, my thinking was provoked and the writing functioned much as a good auxiliary would. I value that it made me reflect on many aspects of psychodrama.

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Book review

by Peter Howie

Creative Training, Sociodrama and Team Building

by Ron Wiener

Ron Wiener's book is organised into three discrete parts, each based on an original manual published by the Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds. Part One on running staff training groups shows how trainers can use action learning methods, such as role-play. Part Two on 'team doctoring' looks at how teams develop and the strategies a consultant can use to work with stuck or malfunctioning teams. Part Three focuses on using sociodrama in training groups and as a method to explore group, social and political issues.

Creative
Training
Sociodrama and Team-building
Ron Wiener
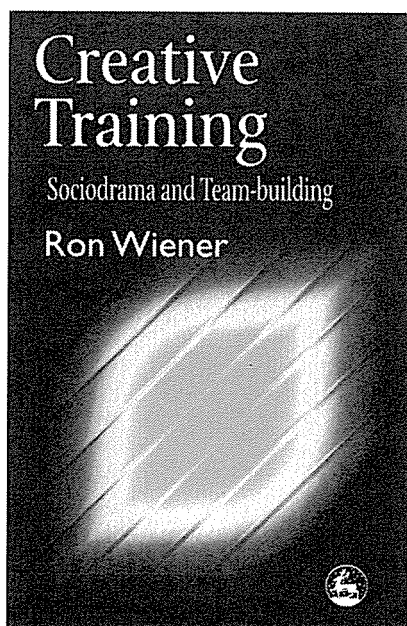
This is an easily readable book, disarming in its simplicity. I think it will be of most use to psychodramatists invited to work in organisations for their first time. The author's suggestions and remarks are loaded with import and contain the seeds of areas to pay further attention to. For example a short paragraph entitled 'When not to team build' on page 81, contains wisdom gained from long association with difficult organisations. If this paragraph were simply read as a passing suggestion its importance could be lost.

A confident psychodramatist having been asked to work in an organisation or team could imagine that the application of psychodramatic principles and techniques will resolve many things. This book could help an organisationally naive psychodramatist become more aware of some of the potential black holes and swampy areas they could encounter.

The layout builds well – he has an interesting way of looking at organisation work from the perspective of participant or team responsibilities; senior management responsibilities; and the role of the team doctor. Each section is very dense in its real import. He makes suggestions I would enshrine as rules for the new organisation worker. For example, on page 77,

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'Unfortunately, not all line managers do what is expected of them and sometimes, either through lack of experience or because they don't want to confront the issue, they delegate the task to the team doctor' – which unfortunately could be a naive psychodramatist.

The book could also be useful for experienced organisational trainers and developers with organisational nous looking for more creative avenues to work with their clients. They would also need a psychodrama trainer or mentor as an adjunct, as the application of psychodramatic principles calls for a type of encounter that is not often demanded in the organisational arena.

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