

# **AANZPA Journal**

**#25**

**December 2016**

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The AANZPA Journal has been established to assist in the fulfilment of the purposes of AANZPA through the dissemination of high quality written articles focused on psychodrama theory and methods, and their applications by practitioners in Australia and New Zealand.

The opinions and views expressed in AANZPA Journal articles and reviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions and recommendations of the editor or of AANZPA.

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AANZPA is an organisation of people trained in Dr. J. L. Moreno's psychodrama theory and methods, and their application and development in Australia and New Zealand.

An ordinary member is certificated as a Psychodramatist, Sociodramatist, Sociometrist, and/or Role Trainer. A TEP is a Trainer, Educator and Practitioner.

The purposes of AANZPA include the establishment and promotion of the psychodramatic method, the setting and maintenance of standards, and the professional association of its members. Members associate within geographical regions, through the AANZPA Journal and electronic publication Socio, and at annual conferences.



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# Editorial

Welcome to the 25<sup>th</sup> edition. The cover is a collage of AANZPA members when they were in their mid-twenties. So much life!

In the first section, several practitioners reflect on the impact of previous articles. A robust and highly satisfying collegiality is being nurtured. This purposeful action runs strongly through subsequent articles.

Warren Parry talks with Rollo Browne on his work applying big data and sociometry to understanding and effecting organisational change. An alchemy is presented, one of precision saturated with an artistry that gifts keen perception.

Selina Reid accompanies Dale Herron in reflecting on her experience as a psychodrama practitioner and trainer, a life lived with daring and dignity. An elixir for the psychic tensions of our time.

Several people describe profound and uplifting experiences of training with Zerka Moreno, a pioneer in psychodrama.

Sara Crane illustrates an awakening that occurred in the everyday life of a city shaken and fractured. She dares to put herself forwards and engage with strangers. The dance of life comes to the streets.

Katerina Seligman, Bev Hosking and Martin Putt contemplate responses to climate change. In an exchange of letters, they develop a deeper appreciation of each other's sensibilities and work and there is an expansion of ideas on ways forwards.

Wendy Macintosh presents doubling as the heart of an approach to working with people who have transgressed professional boundaries. She illustrates the precision of building cooperative working relationships in fraught situations.

Jenny Wilson offers an informative review of a handbook that is promoting a working synthesis of psychodrama and CBT.

Jen Hutt introduces a book that illustrates the conflicted warm-up of *white anti-racists* in dealings between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia. Fresh light is shone on *white stigma*, 'an intervention in itself'.

A warm heartedness runs through the journal. Often the expressions are direct to specific people. The work of reciprocity and building collegiality has been a coherent theme in the content, and has also been worked at consciously in the various processes used to assist the writing.

There have been conversations, interviews, emails, edits, reviews, blind reviews and various consultations and supervision sessions. A piece of writing that is easy to read with a natural flow has usually had a lot of effort put into it. Typically the writers have had to repeatedly craft their piece to create a satisfying expression they hope will be clear and understandable.

Welcome to those who are new to the journal. Welcome also to reading the work produced in previous editions which are all available online at [www.aanzpa.org](http://www.aanzpa.org). The collected work of 25 years attests to psychodrama as a vibrant practice with a distinct and comprehensive methodology very well suited for the world, as it is.

Dr Philip D. Carter, PhD

Editor



## Previous journal articles: Reflections and implications

*Dr. J. L. Moreno – Marriage Therapist*  
by Richard Fowler

ANZPA Journal #3, 1994, pages 55-65

Reflections by Walter Logeman

To build theory and practice based on Moreno's principles it is useful to understand what Moreno said in the first place.

The article by Richard Fowler (1994), *Dr. J.L. Moreno – Marriage Therapist*, is a good exposition of Moreno's work. Richard says, "I have enjoyed the challenge of setting out what Moreno has to say in a systematic order." Richard includes theory and techniques and makes it easy to get to the heart of Moreno's marriage therapy.

The article highlighted for me that '*tele*', *the appreciative mutual flow of feeling, is strong between the partners in a couple. The therapist activates this loving healing potential, but is not the source of it.* In line with this theory, Moreno used the term *catalyst* to describe one of the roles of the director.

More than exposition of Moreno's work is needed if we are to fully embrace psychodrama as a basis for couples practice. Richard concludes:

*I have found that Moreno provides a basis from which to develop useful and effective theories, methods and techniques to enrich counselling and therapy with couples. [We need to] develop and extend Moreno's ideas.* (p. 65).

To *develop, enrich and extend* Moreno's work. That is in line with what Zerka said: *Moreno is the creator, someone else can sort out the details.*



Richard's paper inspires me to develop the psychodramatic approach to couple therapy training. It is clear that Moreno was a marriage therapist, that couple therapy is an application of psychodrama (in its most generic sense). Committed experimentation building on Moreno's principles can develop relationship therapy that can be confidently applied by psychodramatists.



**Walter Logeman** is a Psychodramatist and Trainer Educator Practitioner in the Christchurch Institute for Training in Psychodrama. He is a psychotherapist in private practice, and in recent years has specialised in training relationship therapists using a psychodramatic approach.



*The FU Decision: Reflections on antisocial role  
development*

by Sean Manning

ANZPA Journal #4, 1995, pages 1-11

Reflections by Kevin Franklin

I have returned to this article numerous times in 25 years and have never quite resolved it, until recently. The author, Sean Manning, describes a scene. The protagonist is 27 year-old Jock with a history of drug and alcohol abuse, violence and jail. In the scene, Jock is aged six. Sean writes:

*He kneels in front of the priest, is blessed, stands and receives his Sacred Heart. He pauses, then in rapid movement, his hands crumple and tear the flimsy picture and he turns and runs from the church. Pieces of torn paper float to the carpet in the vacated space. (p. 4).*

In that “fuck you” moment *the new role developed ... is progressive and functional as opposed to fragmenting, dysfunctional or restrictive. And, practised over many similar rebellions, the new role will become a finely tuned response to every situation that otherwise might have hurt or humiliated him.*

The article resonated with me, in particular, making sense of the exact moment that I decided to resign as Senior Teacher of Science and Biological Sciences.

I had spent a lot of time as a teacher consistently moving toward “Jack,” a renowned 14 year-old ‘difficult’ student. In the pre-siren morning calm, I was walking along a corridor, and there he was with a couple of mates and, close-by, two teachers. He called out, “How’re ya going, ya’ fucking cunt?” I took him at face value, accepting his lingua franca as words of endearment which I experienced as one of the most amazing things that a budding heterosexual boy could call me! The symbolism in the boy was truly poetic and totally inappropriate to the norms of school, yet I’m sure that it was the lingua franca of his home life. On behalf of Jack, my 14 year old self was in rebellion with the petty

bourgeoisie norms of school. I knew then, I am *resigned*. I resigned in December 1982 to do a BPsych and then a PhD.

Manning's 1995 article included *principles of working with antisocial personality disorder*. He added, *such a pervasive pattern of disregard ... and violation of ... others will produce censure, condemnation and punishment*. Instead of righteousness, like Manning, I discovered a first principle of Psychodrama. Manning wrote, *the psychodramatist's view must be different, taking into account the progressive, functional nature of the FU role*.

Thank you Sean, Jock and Jack!



**Kevin Franklin** is a Psychodramatist, TEP, Director of Perth Campus, Clinical Psychologist, PhD (clinical psychology) and a practicing gay-man. I write practicing gay-man to repudiate homophobia and similar cultural "forces" that interpret me in mortal sin or behaving anti-socially. We – peoples of this earth – likely will never come to fully comprehend the psychodramatic role.



*Becoming Jane: Appreciating her being and becoming  
through explorations of role*

by Don Reekie

ANZPA Journal #16, 2007, pages 46-54

Reflections by Jo-Anne Colwell

Don Reekie's article in the 2007 ANZPA Journal still resonates with me. Here was someone else who could see that limited word descriptors were a shadow of what can be seen in a role. Rereading the article has only strengthened my connection to Don's thinking about Role Dynamics.

Don discusses the central organising factor, which is akin to how I see core roles. This central organising factor is observed through the culture of Jane's relating within the context of her city cousin's criticism.

Don focuses on the progressive gestalts of Jane's functioning rather than the negative aspects of her actions allowing us to view Jane through a healthy lens. We can see how her functioning is informed via her past experiences and how she struggles to respond in a healthy manner to a difficult situation.

Don's approach to role dynamics is a systematic holistic way of viewing role development. Don acknowledges whose perceptions and constructions are being used in making meaning and offering interpretation of another and that this will affect the interpretation of our role constructions in others.

Viewing Jane through the lens of role dynamics enables us to gain a richer, more complete picture of Jane's functioning. Don's work has supported me in retaining a focus on health in my own work. What is often viewed as unhealthy behaviour by others, when viewed through my health lens is an adequate response given the traumatic background. Convincing others to come on board and support rather than berate is crucial when I'm working with adolescents with trauma histories.

Don's insights and deeper understanding of role dynamics influence my therapeutic hypothesis when working with clients and relating in my personal life. What on the surface can be seen as unhealthy functioning, when unpacked and viewed through the lens of a health-focused role

dynamics perspective, can be seen as the person doing the best they can in response to difficult situations.



*Jo-Anne Colwell is a psychologist and psychodramatist. She has worked in her Melbourne private practice for over 16 years. Jo-Anne's focus is trauma, in other words, Family Violence. Jo-Anne works with children, adolescents and adults. She is currently working toward finishing her doctorate. Jo-Anne has designed the Bystander Behaviour Program for bullying and will soon be trialling the program in a Victorian Secondary School.*



## *Me, I, you and all of us*

by Sandra Turner

AANZPA Journal #17, 2008, pages 18-27

### Reflections by Sue Christie

At the time of reading Sandra Turner's article *Me, I, you and all of us* in 2008 I remember it having a profound impact on me in particular a sentence in the case study about Rachel which said, "...Rachel received attention without any requirement or pressure to perform." This statement affected me deeply as it mirrored my longing to be loved simply for who I am. Rachel's story filled me with hope. I realised that there was potential for healing and that I could change my life. Forever I had been in survival mode believing I was inadequate, unlovable and that everything was my fault. I managed to get by by anticipating the needs of others, being a competent systems analyst and interventionist and leaving myself out of the equation. Even now I feel moved by that mirroring and I feel the tears welling up in me, tears of acknowledgement that my experience was real and that there was an explanation for the challenges I experienced in my life.

The article taught me about Moreno's three stages of development - doubling, mirroring and role reversal - which was an eye opener as up till then I had only known them as tools used in producing a psychodrama. I learned about these stages of my development and that in fact I had many aspects of healthy functioning I could build on.

I had never met Sandra but a couple of years after reading her article I made a point of connecting with her and let her know about its meaning for me. She really met me. At some stage during our conversation I made a self-deprecating comment and she laughed. Her light and breezy response was neither dismissive nor fanned the fire of my neurosis instead she saw me and mirrored my functioning as a healthy human being in a learning process conveying her recognition that we are all involved in a process of development all the time.

I appreciated the relevance of this article in 2008 and 8 years later it continues to be relevant in particular the integration of Moreno's theory into my practice and developing identity as a sociodramatist.

I can be myself.



*Sue Christie is an advanced psychodrama trainee. She is a workforce /organisational development specialist in the public sector with experience in the education and health sectors. In her current role as an internal consultant in an Auckland metro District Health Board, she has the opportunity to focus on group work, investigating and exploring the social systems alive in the many different corners of the organisation, designing interventions to make it a better place to get care and work.*



*Portrait of a woman diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, incorporating a Morenian perspective*

by Kate Cooke

AANZPA Journal #23, 2014, pages 63 to 76

Reflections by Diana Jones

I loved reading Kate Cooke's article. It is easy to read and understand. I gained insight into Ailsa's childhood where in response to a series of ongoing excruciating events, her best survival solutions were to "die" or "go mad." These events badly interfered with her childhood somatic capacities resulting in damage to her psychological survival and identity. Ailsa emerges into adulthood as a self-harming client with Borderline Personality Disorder.

With two questions: "Surely motives and reasons for doing something of such significance as deliberately harming oneself would be apparent to the self-harming person? Is there a part of the traumatised psyche that sabotages the self?" Kate Cooke deftly weaves together Fairburn and Winnicott's attachment theory, Bateman and Fogerty's Mentalization-based Therapy, and Moreno's evolution of role development with her work as psychodramatist. In doing so, Kate references theories that reveal the psychological dynamics occurring, the associated neurobiology, and the delicate long-term work needed for repair.

I despaired for Ailsa's painful early life, and that the adults in her life were blind to her early and ongoing agonies. The awful question emerged - "Is it that without caring adults, the alien self becomes the only known self to the child?" I see something akin to this in my work where leaders appear incapable of accepting their positive qualities, and only tune into what they have yet to develop. It's as if a learning gap has emerged.

Kate's work over time gently reawakens Ailsa's somatic awareness, and her capacity to reflect, going beyond the ghastly repetitive default response of thinking she is at fault, and must be hurt (this time, by herself). I was inspired by Ailsa's vision for herself — to have a "normal life."



It had always struck me that anyone who seeks therapy is incredibly brave and resourceful—they ask for help *and* go to a person who can provide this.

Four of Kate's ideas are relevant to my work as a leadership coach:

1. Being aware that people with overdeveloped default behaviors don't know their impact on others.
2. When children are left on their own to cope with life threatening events, their ways of surviving manifest in adult life.
3. By looking into your own life, it is possible to identify the cause of fragmenting behaviors. Where blame is assigned there is no ownership of capacities to generate anything new.
4. Identifying the cause of fragmenting behaviors offers three things:
  - power for the client to choose a path forward and to expand the development of the self
  - emergence of a new capacity - to have a vision for oneself beyond what is currently known
  - Willingness to accept an adult as a trusted companion.

Kate's article has relevance to agencies providing preventative mental health services. Attachment theory and Moreno's theory of role development helps everyone to see the damage of abuse and neglect to healthy child development and the subsequent personal and social costs.



*Diana Jones is a Sociometrist, and Trainer, Educator, Practitioner with AANZPA. She works as a leadership advisor and coach with senior leaders and their teams. She has been applying sociometry in organisations for over 25 years. Diana's forthcoming book is called "Leadership Material: How personal experience shapes executive presence."*



## *Saying YES: Embracing life as we age*

by Rosemary Nourse

AANZPA Journal #24, 2015, pages 17 to 28

### Reflections by Vivienne Pender

Rosemary Nourse in her article, *Saying YES: Embracing life as we age*, brings us in touch with real love, deep compassion, and a vitality and pleasure in the theatre of truth.

After reading this article, I become fully warmed up to four education sessions I will lead during the week involving doctors, nurses, allied health workers and volunteers who work alongside physically frail people of all ages. I feel passionately connected to the vitality of the work and better able to create educational relationships that connect each person with liveliness and curiosity and a willingness to thoughtfully role reverse with people they meet in their pain and frailty.

Rosemary brings a meticulous attention to detail, a compassionate and fearless openness to role reversing with frailty, and an intelligent and respectful problem solving ability with a group. She gives us an eagle-eyed view where she considers patiently how to set the stage, the type of chair and spaces between to ensure accessibility and relationship for people using walkers, sticks, wheelchairs, who are hard of hearing, with degrees of sight.

She writes in a way that encourages me to think of the sensitivity and intelligent planning of the architect of the building she finds which meets the many needs of the group work she facilitates.

Her dramatic production has me delighting in the scenes as they unfold: an obstacle, how will this be met? another obstacle, and another. Group norms are developed and sustained. There is a purposeful intent establishing and developing a group where 'everyone matters', 'not taking anything for granted'.

The protagonists' choices leave me with a sense of wonder and a renewed appreciation of how psychodrama teaches us to say 'Yes to Life.'

Thank you Rosemary.



***Vivienne Pender***

*Psychodramatist, psychotherapist, counsellor and supervisor, enjoys working in a hospice and in Private Practice. She greatly values vitality and creativity.*



*Psychodrama and infant mental health:  
An essay and a conversation*

by Patricia O'Rourke and Heather Warne

AANZPA Journal #24, 2015, pages 29-37

Reflections by Claire Guy

Reading *Psychodrama and infant mental health: An essay and a conversation* by Patricia O'Rourke and Heather Warne brings tears to my eyes. The essay describes a working integration of psychodrama and infant mental health principles that enlarges both areas. Heather's delicate work of social atom repair for, and between, damaged parent and abused, neglected baby touches me deeply. I feel softened by her sensitivity and compassion. I warm up to memories of giving birth and the immediate and on-going love and protectiveness I experienced as each baby was laid warm and wet on my belly. My capacity for love and compassion has expanded through being a mother. Love is the central ingredient of my life; and of my work as a therapist, supervisor and trainer.

Heather's love of her clients is palpable. She works in the here and now drama of life. Her stage is the playroom. Her protagonist the relationship between parent and child. She is director and auxillary, doubling, mirroring, modelling and role reversing. She expresses the unspoken surplus reality in the room. Although not a psychodramatist she has learnt to think, imagine, feel and act at times like a psychodramatist. Heather has developed these roles through supervision with Patricia. Their work attests the potential potency of a long term supervisory relationship.

My clinical work is 60% supervision. This comprises psychodrama practitioners/trainees and non-psychodrama therapists and other professionals. I teach mainly through my way of being with the supervisees. The supervisee, regardless of their orientation, grows in trust, confidence and self-esteem through receiving attuned doubling and astute mirroring. The angry youth worker develops compassion through role reversing; the hesitant clinical leader develops inner authority as I mirror her conflicted roles; the self-condemning psychodrama trainee visibly blossoms with a mirror of her 'good enough functioning'.

Working authentically in the here and now with an open heart is central to all my work. I imagine this short article will encourage others to this humane and potent practice.



*Claire left her homeland, Scotland, aged 23, for an adventure in NZ. Obtaining a position in a Tertiary Institute teaching sociology, she grew in self-esteem and confidence through the positive mirroring of colleagues and students. She fell in love with psychodrama at her first residential workshop and was certificated 9 years later. She is currently a psychotherapist, TEP and has served on the Board and Executive. Her many loves include her multi-layered international family, friends, colleagues, clients, trainees, playing with children, singing, laughing, dancing, yoga, reading in the bath, sleeping under the stars and cycle touring.*



## *Moreno's scientific methodology:*

### *By, of and for the people*

by Walter Logeman

AANZPA Journal #24, 2015, pages 51 to 62

#### Reflections by David Cartwright

I am encouraged and inspired by reading *Walter Logeman's paper — Moreno's scientific methodology: By, of and for the people* — in the 2015 edition of the AANZPA Journal.

Walter's last sentence says, "The possibility exists that sociometry is a key to the survival of humanity," and I warm up to this possibility, particularly given the current crises on Planet Earth and the epidemic of human loneliness, isolation, and anti-social behaviour that I see and hear about.

Inspired, my thoughts and conversations turn to social technologies. I become interested in how we can learn to be more aware of, and cultivate, communicating and interacting in ways that enrich and enliven, in contrast to talking and behaving in ways that leave us feeling even more isolated. As a therapist, I have become sensitive to the fluctuations of our inner 'self-esteem-o-meters' as I interact with others. With some things that you or I say and do, the 'meters' go up—we feel enriched, and with others, the meters go down—we feel diminished. It is an education, learning to tell one from the other.

There are already some sociometric technologies in place that represent the choices we make, for example, internet-based 'likes' on Facebook, and reputation-based ratings on Uber and Trade Me / eBay. These show a basic type of tele in the form of approval or disapproval for specific transactions – "I like what you shared on Facebook there" (thumbs up)", or, "This item was not as you described, I'm wary of trading with you again" (thumbs down). These feedback indicators become part of a social network measure of esteem or value, that we base further choices on. I am wondering how we might employ similar kinds of indicators, not electronically, but inter-personally, during encounter, to enliven our interactions and co-create valuing of self and other.

Walter's paper summarises and connects me to Moreno's vision and intention for social science research, towards a world where people feel better about, and more connected to, themselves and each other.



*Dr David Cartwright is an advanced trainee in psychodrama in Christchurch. He is a private practice counsellor and trainee psychotherapist.*

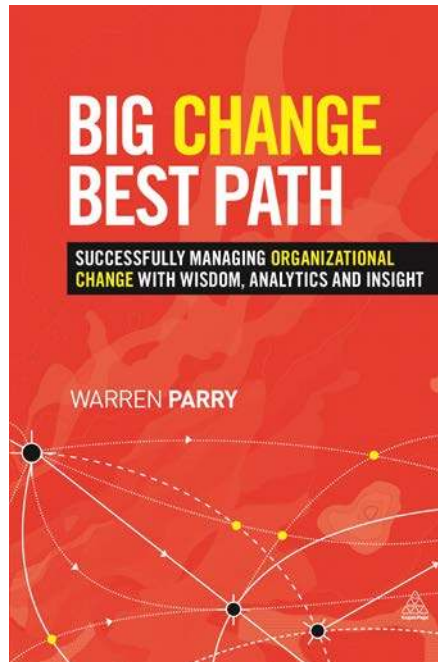






# Sociodramatic principles and big data in organisational change

*Warren Parry talks to Rollo Browne*



Warren recently published *Big Change Best Path*, a book on his work on leading organisational change. In this interview, he discusses change, his research, the links to sociodrama and psychodrama and the principles that underlie his practice. Warren was centrally involved in psychodrama from 1976 and pioneered the development of sociodrama becoming a TEP in Sociodrama in 1986. Warren subsequently set up his own consulting business, and developed ChangeTracking to assist leaders to implement change programs successfully. In 2013, ChangeTracking joined Accenture who have since used the proprietary method in large scale change initiatives. *Big Change Best Path* was published by Kogan Page in 2015.

**Rollo:** From sociodrama to organisational consulting you've been involved in understanding change all of your professional life. When did you realise that you needed to use data in order to significantly increase your impact?

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

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

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

**Warren:** One time we were working in Europe in a manufacturing company that was taken over and the CEO was replaced with this very tough German leader. He inherited the ChangeTracking survey that we had just done. I went to Helsinki and presented the results to him the day before we were to meet the executive. He just listened, didn't say much. I thought 'are we ever going to get through to this person.' The next day after the presentation to the executive he stood up and he said to his team, "this soft stuff is really hard" and went into this 45 minute

monologue. "See I told you there was this problem in the production area" and he pointed to the graph looking through the French groups. "And over here in Germany I've been telling you there's an issue at this level." What was interesting is that data mirrored his perception. It's one thing for a CEO to say, "I think this is going on with the middle management in France," but when that same issue comes from people in the organisation it's much more powerful.

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

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

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

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

data to find answers to their questions. We're using sophisticated analytics to move from the perception to the insights.

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

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

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

**Warren:** Yes, we can't physically role reverse when tracking change across an organisation, but having said that, we do use those principles. We did ChangeTracking in a large police unit in the UK and we were giving feedback to the top 12 executives including the Commissioner. What was interesting is we said, "Ok, you've got 3,000 people in your workforce of 10,000 filling this out" and instead of just saying, "Here's the survey results," we said, "Here is 750 hours worth of your people giving feedback at various levels." In this case we'd printed out a composite profile of employees at different levels, for example, Henry Smith, a constable or a female detective sergeant. We had a photo for each and we handed around sheets of paper. We gave one to each executive and said, "Read that out, stand in their shoes." So each one of the 10 or 12 executives read out script that we'd prepared.

We made it real. So the interesting thing is even before we got into the results, they'd had a photo and an experience because when the person read out this person's profile, we said, "What do you think it would be like for you being a senior constable in the middle of this culture change?" That warmed them up as an executive to multiple points of view. We were physically limited because they were sitting around a table. I was on a video-link. So we couldn't do what we do in psychodrama or sociodrama. But the principles applied and they got pretty tough feedback. But as a consequence of the warm-up, they embraced the results and despite that pretty tough feedback, they maintained their spontaneity, they maintained their creativity. So I took them deeply into the results. And then said, "Look, with this kind of feedback, it's normal to get overwhelmed, feel there's nothing you can do, even feel depressed."

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

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

**Rollo:** Which includes feeling depressed.

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

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

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

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

**Warren:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Warren:** Yes. It is both intuition and accumulated knowledge.

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

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

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

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

**Warren:** That's right. So the more information that people get actually makes them more fearful. It's only through discussion in a trusted relationship whether that's in the workplace or outside the workplace that people talking through issues helps to lower fear.

**Rollo:** Okay. That's an example of a blind spot in the mental model of change.

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

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

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

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

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



professionals naming patterns. The challenge in moving to pattern recognition is first to show the patterns and second to make it visual.

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

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

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

**Warren:** You've got to use different statistical methods. When we built the map we were working with the CSIRO, the government science group in Australia, with the people in the exploration mining field, and we noticed that they were using self-organising maps, SOMs. It's pattern recognition. It takes our data and it organises it on a three dimensional map. We took 2 or 3 years of experimenting to find how do you make a really useful map. The current map we use involved 33 billion calculations to create recognisable patterns. The SOM works on the principle, remarkably similar to psychodrama and sociodrama, of putting likeminded people together and unlike people far apart. We built the

original map on 53,000 people. Imagine 53,000 people standing on a big football field, I mean, you don't get 53,000 people in a room. You might get 100, you might get 50 but you don't get 53,000. In sociodrama, you might set out a social system and say, "Put all the people that you trust close to you and put all the people that you mistrust far away." What I find fascinating is that's what the SOM is doing mathematically using 33 billion calculations and it's doing it in a way that no human being can.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Warren:** You could be developing the roles incrementally and then a tipping point occurs. So you then integrate the gestalt. Perhaps in a

catharsis of integration or a catharsis of abreaction, where there's an outpouring of feeling and after that it feels different and anger is not needed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Warren:** I don't remember making a conscious choice about that but I do remember following where was the most creativity and then asking

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

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

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

**Rollo:** And the purpose?

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

**Rollo:** Psychodrama's never quite made it into the fabric of society except in some niche forms. I think it's logistically difficult to get more than 50 people in a room – people come and they want to be told something – but to actually get co-explorers is a huge challenge. You can work it in smaller groups when you've warmed them up to something

but actually as a methodology it can't keep expanding beyond a certain size.

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

**Rollo:** That's it.

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

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

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

**Warren:** Absolutely. So again, there's action-reflection and creating.

**Rollo:** Well, action-reflection by itself isn't quite enough to create change.

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

**Rollo:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

**Rollo:** That's another principle.

**Warren:** Yes.

**Rollo:** So just to finish, do you think of yourself as having been a researcher all along?

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

**Rollo:** That's the point.

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

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

**Rollo:** Well that's very Morenian because "the evolution of the creator is more important than the evolution of the creation."

**Warren:** Yes.





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

Warren pioneered the development of Change Tracking, a patented system of predictive analytics that enables business leaders to see whether change programs are on track and take corrective actions, as needed.

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## **Dale Herron: Opportunity, courage, freedom**

Dr Dale Herron expresses many roles in the AANZPA community. She is an initiator, explorer, experimenter, close companion, friend, mentor, supervisor, psychodramatist, educator and trainer. She is also a Distinguished Member of AANZPA and continues to be actively involved in the work of the Auckland Training Centre for Psychodrama.



While many members of AANZPA have met and worked with Dale, many others have not. In this article, Dale describes in her own words the early influences of her family and communities in the USA, her subsequent immigration to NZ and the many friendships and contributions she has made in AANZPA. Scattered throughout are her reflections on the process of 'becoming' through psychodrama and the freedoms inherent in the method.

The text below is drawn from recent conversations between Dale and Selina Reid.

### **Learning to sink or swim in a rough and tumble world**

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, on the 31st January 1942, right in the middle of World War II. All my mothers' brothers, bar one who was ill, were on active service. My father had a heart murmur, thank God, so he didn't go. It was a terrifying time to be born. Hard to explain if you've not lived through war.

The war moulded the first years of my life. My first memory is that everyone around me had concerns, not that I knew what they were about. For me, the world was my mother, father and a very small place to live.

We lived in one of two huge buildings that housed hundreds of people, including lots and lots of children. There wasn't a sense of being

watched over or overlooked, as all of us children were on our own and caring for one another from the time we were little; none of us had much of our parents during the war. I learnt to get on with some and not others. I learnt not to complain and to hold my own. These are probably all the things that I'm famous for!

When I was four, my father took my mother and me out to California to live with her oldest sister for over a year. It was a completely different environment. We had gardens and the gardener used to teach me the names of things. I remember following him around and chatting most of the time! It's probably where I got my love of gardens and gardening.

I started school in California, which I didn't like at all, until I learnt the ways of these children. They were very different from me. Their parents had more money and they had scooters and all sorts of toys that we didn't have in Chicago. There were a lot of boys living on my block and they taught me how to ride their scooters, which I really liked.

We went back to Chicago to live in the same building as before, but in a nicer flat. We didn't have much space, but we played hard. We had a huge community and people either got along or they didn't. You learnt to sink or swim. Because the boys were very tough, my father taught me how to box. He said, "No, I'm not going to sort this for you. I'm going to teach you how to do it."

The other kids were the most significant influence in my up-bringing because we children spent all of our time outdoors with each other, not with our families. Manners were non-existent and it was very rough and tumble. I think it made me very flexible, but is also what made me so difficult for some people later in NZ. They thought I was rough or tough.

## **Early foundations for groupwork**

My mother was from an Orthodox Jewish family, but my father didn't discover he was Jewish until he was an adult. On the weekend my parents sent me to a Semi-Orthodox Jewish children's class, which I hated. Many of the other children went to a church around the corner, which I loved because of the singing, so I used to try to sneak out to get there. After a few times doing this, my Dad took me to an unorthodox non-denominational Jewish 'Sunday School', where they taught about real things; offering suggestions and leaving us be. It was a very large place with lots of music at the service in the Synagogue after the

children's class. There were hundreds of us there, including children of all ages. There was no up-tightness about it. It was truly wonderful.

The Rabbi was very determined to create as many community connections as he could. He cared that people would experience life. I came to this community young and grew up in it. As 14, 15 or 16-year-olds, he got us up the front singing, whether we could sing or not. That place gave me the background for understanding about the metaphysical in later life, and maybe this was a foundation experience of effective groupwork.

## **Learning about subgroups**

In my last three years of high-school, we moved to the far North of Chicago, right on the lake. The girls at the school there were very welcoming and I felt for the first time ever the bond of women as tight, if not tighter, than any family. I was part of a self-identified female Jewish club; a close-knit subgroup. We met regularly as a group and I warmed to the relational work that took place among us. We enjoyed ourselves and got into lots of trouble.

That grouping was for a particular time and purpose. We didn't keep up afterwards; it was just for that time. And that's something about psychodrama too, that a group forms and it has its particular connection, which is so strong, and when it's over the warm-up can go.

## **New worlds open up**

After high-school, I went away on a scholarship to a university for a year and in my second year I came back to Chicago to attend North Western University. It was a really old university, which I loved. It had a very beautiful campus right on the lake. It gave me a love for working in tradition that I had never had in my life. Nothing had been traditional so far, only transient. I think that is the thing that allowed me to take to psychodrama and to stay with it once I got involved. I could perceive something that was traditional, significant and could grow. I could stay and let it build.

The transfer to NW University was the making of me. Suddenly a whole other world opened up that I'd never seen before. Well-known poets and writers were attracted there, and we would meet famous scholars in seminars that we'd never thought we could meet in life. It was just the right place, the right people; lots of us on the lake developing close friendships, and the teaching was stunning.

After my undergraduate degree, I worked for a year before I took the final postgraduate entrance exam. I came first in my year and that shocked me. It was the first time that I realised that if I really applied myself I could do it. I worked like hell and was determined. And that is the determination that helped me stick with psychodrama when it was all new, or in turmoil.

NW University offered me a full scholarship to finish my PhD in English literature, which also explains why I love setting scenes and making a story. I was offered a teaching fellowship and spent the following four years there. The teaching staff were all male, besides me, and we were very well supported in trying out new creative things.

Then there was the big financial crash, which affected the universities. I was lucky to get a job at the University of Illinois' Chicago Circle campus; a new experimental university in the middle of the city. I was there for seven years and I loved it. It was huge, with fifty-fifty men and women. I had a ball working in a very respectful environment in my own classrooms. I could be very experimental. Nobody was telling us what to do, but we could talk to someone if we wanted to. We talked a lot with each other. It was the most wonderful way to learn. Magical.

Reflecting back, it was the places I landed in, as much as having parents or a genealogy, that allowed me to grow.

## **To New Zealand and Psychodrama**

Near the end of my tenure, my husband, Reuben, got a job as Head of the Maths Department at Victoria University in New Zealand. On the way there we spent six months in Israel because Reuben's family and children were there. We then travelled to many different places for a further six months before landing in a cold Wellington.

After we were in Wellington for about three years, our friend, Peter Biggs, brought a flyer and left it on our kitchen table. It was for a three-week residential workshop at the University of Auckland with Max and Lynette Clayton. Reuben and I talked it over with our friends, Valerie and Rex Hunton, and we decided to try it.

There would have been perhaps thirty-five of us meeting psychodrama for the first time at that workshop. It was a time of things emerging and it was very, very rich. A lot of work was done outside the venue. For example, we would get given a task and go down into the city, always with someone else. We'd look at this and that, or write it up;

all kinds of observations and learning about systems. Max wanted us to be observant. He really pushed us to do that. He wanted us not to make judgements. I really respect that Max had us do this. I had lived in Chicago all my life so there were things in Auckland I'd never seen. I was fascinated by the whole lot.

## **A time of exploration**

It was a big time. A time when people were really keen to grow. Rex, Valerie, Reuben, and Peter Biggs, were already involved in various forms of personal growth and I had begun running groups. So we carried on, with a psychodrama twist. It was a time of exploration.

We didn't only use psychodrama, of course, because we weren't that skilled. It was a very exciting time of developing what we already knew and adding psychodrama to that. We were all just beginners so we probably didn't even know that there was more we could do or that what we did wasn't very good, but people loved it. I travelled around Australia and had a huge amount of work, so it was easy for me on the second or third day of a workshop to introduce something psychodramatic, thereby having life-long learning experiences.

One of the main things for me was being with Valerie. We worked together, often doubling each other in the groups. She and I became very close friends and colleagues, and all these years later we're just the same.

At the time I wasn't aware of 'developing'; I was aware of 'doing'. I was completely involved in 'becoming'. It was wonderful for me. There was a sense of freedom in the whole thing. We were all cooperating with each other. We had all begun to sow seeds and that was why Max came. Max would turn up and by and large we would enrol for perhaps two workshops a year.

## **Max and Lynette Clayton**

Max and Lynette each had their own sense of how to carry psychodrama into the world. They were looking for people who held the strings of things and who fitted with them sociometrically. Max would meet with Evan Sherrard, Don Reekie and me, usually just the three of us, and he started teaching a little bit in each session. We would meet for a couple of days for quite a long time, and it kept the three of us meeting beyond those sessions.

As we three were working at Presbyterian Support Services, this became a seminal place for psychodrama. Evan, Joan Dalloway and I

were also involved with setting up the Psychotherapy Department at the Auckland University of Technology, where we introduced psychodrama into the curriculum.

It was at that point that Lynnette became more interested in my work. Every time she came to NZ she would stay with me and we would look at my work, if I wanted to. We would also work together in NZ and Australia when we could. We clicked in our ability to work together and we loved travelling together. We loved walking and we had wonderful times. Her way of working was really different to mine, but she had no problem with me doing what I do and trying out things.

## **Meeting Zerka**

In the early years Max invited Zerka Moreno to Australia several times. I would get work in Australia and then go to be with her. She really liked me and I really liked her. I had lunch with her the first time I met her, at a big long table at one of the universities. I had the whole lunch time with her before I realised that she didn't have a second working hand. That's the best way I can describe her. I couldn't believe how she did it because I am pretty observant. Then she said, "Can you come back with me. I'm going to have a sleep and I need someone to unzip my dress." I said, "Of course" and after that we just bonded.

## **Relationships among us are important**

The thing that has always carried me onward is that I have never cared if I tried something and it did not work. Something else is always emerging. Your attitude, which is probably born when you are in the cradle, about how you get on with the other stuff that's going on around you - do you participate? do you keep your eyes open? are you scared? are you interested? - these things are important to me. That is what my life was like during the war; I had no choice.

I'm curious right down to the last bit of my toes. I always want to know what is happening. And also, I love it when other people do it. I don't get upset whatever people do. I haven't got this vision of 'this is the right way'.

I would like to say to the people who are trying new things, value your own continuity and creativity to bring forward what is in you. The whole thing stops if people are concerned about how things 'should' be done, like worrying about whether you're going against, toward, or whether



the committee does this, or I do that. All of that is trivial compared to the warm-up that people are bringing and that has to continue. That assumes that you're not afraid of each other because who else are you creating with?

The relationships amongst us all have always been important. In psychodrama, I have never been alone. There has always been someone to do things with or who might say, "What do you think of this?" or, "Come on let's go do that," or, "Let's have a walk and talk about what's happening."

I remember when it was just the three of us, Evan, Don and me, and we used to just pour out stuff. Even when Max was there, we would pour out stuff. We didn't follow through with most of it, but in there was the seed of whatever happened next. Then the things that needed to be, or could be, emerged and we could help each other with that.

A keystone is to have the opportunity and the courage to try out new things. Everywhere, when two or more of us are together, we can be fresh and we can be free. We can have a purpose and we can be safe doing it. With psychodrama we have the freedom to do it in our own way, not anyone else's.



### About the interviewer

*Selina Reid will be certificated as a psychodramatist in January 2017. Selina first met Dale in 1996 through the Human Development & Training Institute counselling training. She lives in Kihikihi, New Zealand and utilizes the psychodrama method in her counselling and groupwork.*



## Zerka T. Moreno



**13.6.1917 – 19.9.2016**

Zerka Moreno was a pioneer in psychodrama, formulating fundamental psychodramatic theory and embedding it in effective practice. She was a co-founder of the International Association for Group Psychotherapy and she established the Psychodramatic Institute in New York in 1942 with J. L. Moreno. They began producing the journal *Group Psychotherapy* in 1947. She was J. L. Moreno's partner and co-creator for over thirty years until his death in 1974. She continued training and teaching worldwide.

My main memory of Zerka is of the acuity of her mind. Though she was over 90 when I attended a training workshop run by her she was as sharp as a tack and nothing escaped her. She directed as easily as breathing, unperturbed by anything that arose on the stage, with a calm, unruffled and insightful manner. She had an almost regal bearing despite her physical frailties - we called her "the queen" – **Gillian Rose**

She embodied the spirit of spontaneity ... not by abandoning technique and theory ... but by honing those skills and listening with heart. We worked on the original stage, used all the levels including the stairs and balcony. Wonderful hours of expression, impression and play of life.

– **Jo Milne-Home**

The thing I am remembering most is Zerka's incredible capacity to interview for role so thoroughly that she warmed auxiliaries up to a high state of spontaneity and willingness to stretch themselves. Through her I learned to appreciate my mother in a new way which freed me from resentment and a conserved view of the world she lived in. I felt Zerka's passionate interest in all of us as both unique individuals and creative change agents. – **Sara Crane**

I was very aware when I was with her I was filling myself up with content, filling myself up with things that were important for me right now that I could make use of immediately in my life ... [she] told me to go out into the forest on the grounds of Moreno Institute and run. But not run in a straight line, but run sort of googly, run all over the place and throw my arms around... So I did that and I did generate some new experience... I'm sure that the naivety did develop through engaging in a whole lot of different activities.

– **Max Clayton** from *The Living Spirit of the Psychodramatic Method*, pages 32 and 171 to 172.



## Letter to Zerka 2016

Dear Zerka

I know when someone dies, regret can arrive unbidden; the letter you didn't send, the 'thank you' you didn't convey, the imagined conversation.

I didn't email you when my thesis was passed. I wish I had. I'd have thanked you for the quotes you sourced and sent and your generous encouragement across the seas. It really kept me plugging away, determined.

I wish I had told you the impact meeting you had for me. Going back through my photo archive, I found a photo of you which I named at the time, "our beautiful queen." In 2005, in the early years of my training, I got inspired and flew across the world to participate in one of your workshops. The workshop was held in the lounge of your home in your retirement village.

I arrived with about a dozen other practitioners and trainees. The first thing that struck me about you was your beauty, your stillness, your straight back, the twinkle in your eye. You took me under your wing and directed me in one of the most profound dramas of my life. The drama was about my relationship with my father, also now passed. I remember there were very few role reversals. The catharsis occurred in your interview for role with me as my father. You stood up from your chair, glided over to me and asked my father such a direct question that I was shocked. Goodness me, I thought, that's pretty direct and frankly, where I come from, nosy! That one question will never leave me and it taught me so much about my social and cultural atom. Years later I did another drama with Max Clayton, where he, capitalising on this warm-up, had me raging against my father with 5 doubles. I can feel those moments as if they were yesterday and they built a softer, more understanding and loving relationship for me with him (not a simple man) in his later years.

That week you were my queen, our queen, gracefully standing, placing yourself in the center of the action with no fuss and then going straight to the heart of the matter.

Darling Zerka it is good to be telling you what a sustaining delight it was to be with you and receive the love of a queen.

With gratitude,

Vanesa

P.S. BTW, I did pass my thesis and then my practical assessment and notice myself more often standing poised in the centre of the action aiming for the heart of the matter.



Vanesa Valentine and Zerka Moreno

## Memories by Don Reekie

In 1982, Zerka Moreno circled the world on a Crusade to stop over-enthusiastic doubling aimed at provoking a catharsis of abreaction. Her eighth Rule of Psychodrama says the Director must allow every group member to be as un-spontaneous "as they are". She understood that catharsis of integration is essential to restoration of health, and that abreaction is often valuable but not essential. She visited Australia and New Zealand. PINZ hosted a week-long workshop in Auckland. She worked positively with protagonists and auxiliaries. Her scene development was unusual for group members - appearing to us overly controlled. In her public Psychodrama, in a full Little Maidment Theatre she directed with sensitivity, compassion and passion. The protagonist resolved significant matters. The wide ranging audience left very appreciative of drama so intimate and healing. Being with Zerka was vitalising.

In 1994, many ANZPA Ozzies and Kiwis went to the BPA International Conference in Oxford. Zerka led a session with over seventy participants from around the planet. She asked, "Why did Dr Moreno create Psychodrama?" Fifty or so answers - each seemed insightful. The "correct" answer escaped them all! Zerka pronounced, "Dr Moreno created Psychodrama because he recognised that language was not the high road to the psyche but that movement is." She elaborated with considerable power.

In 1996 as a new TEP, I went to the annual International Trainers Week in upper-state New York. Previously led by Zerka assisted by Leif Tag Blomkvist, it was to be co-led by participants with Tag facilitating the process and Zerka an honoured member. Each member directed a session and the group processed immediately following. The agreement was for Zerka to make her comments at these times. In every drama for half the week at some point she would interrupt with "No! No! No! Dr Moreno would...." The first director - and all subsequent - reminded Zerka of the agreement made and asked her to hold her comment until the processing time. Zerka waited. She sat down graciously accepting each rebuff. On my return home I told Max, he was flabbergasted: "What the Dragon Woman accepted that! She never would have ..." Throughout the week her breadth of wisdom regarding the human condition and Psychodrama's power to strengthen values, heal and promote practical loving washed through me and into me.

On the Beacon Moreno stage at Broughton Place, I was protagonist and Lars Tauvon, from Sweden, directed. My first auxiliary ego was Zerka as Gwen. Within a moment she was Gwen and at key moments her spontaneous responses were quite simply Gwen. In a sociodrama on taking our responsibilities Zerka became Hannah Arendt walking into Eichman's cell in Jerusalem. She was truly Arendt as I realised later reading Arendt and then seeing documentaries and news reels. I was not surprised to learn that Zerka had known this woman well. These two experiences of her remarkable abilities as auxiliary have been echoed over the years. She entered the heart and soul of the protagonist and their auxiliary egos. All of us experienced many one to one contacts with her where she was auxiliary to us. In the group she met us lovingly, encouraging our strength and vitality.

I directed towards the end of the week. Two Europeans became dissatisfied. One complained when in role reversals they were not remaining in their chosen "auxiliary role". The other objected when the protagonist moved to a childhood scene - my having noticed the protagonist's movements were no longer those of the adult in his office. I had asked: "How old are you Now?" and "Where are we now?" It was suggested there should have been thorough interview - for scene and then role, I had moved the protagonist too quickly. I reminded them that I was directing and we would review later. Zerka quietly asserted, "Don has his directing in hand and does it in his way." Though no one had accepted Zerka's interjecting in their drama's her quiet words here had resounding authority.

In 1999, Gwen and I attended the ASGPP Philadelphia Conference. We received this same quality of *love*. She engaged with each of us many times with full interest and remembrance. In 1998, she had addressed the IAGP London congress on Ethical Anger. I had acquired the tape and found it of great value. During the ASGPP AGM Gwen and I stood at the back with Ann Hale and Zerka. A young woman responded to the Executive report with an outburst of distress and rage. Zerka brought her away from the explanations and assurances of goodwill. They stood close to us with a small group of sympathisers. Zerka acted as she had advocated in her address: full open listening and generous recognition of feelings and experience. She legitimised these as the woman's own and of great value. She said again and again, "You have every right to be angry." She said, "You must know your experience and your feelings. Know you have your right to recognise your experience and have your anger. It cannot be denied and can never be explained away. It is yours to know and to guide your actions." I saw the woman calm, stand taller and say a

few things that she was committed to in her living. Friends welcomed her statements. Her presence was renewed.

Zerka, with Leif Tag and others, led a sociodrama session in the main hall. It became the cafe society in Vienna after the Great War. This context significant for Jacob Moreno was inhabited by philosophers, scientists, artists and a broad range of Viennese inhabitants. It brought alive a place and time that it is important not to disregard.

I led a session on Role Training. Some thirty crammed a room 12m by 3.5m - high up in the building. I struggled to see how the shape would fit a psychodrama curve. My curve was rather elongated! I set out my purpose, warmed up the group and had a protagonist. The door opened, Zerka came in and took a chair from the stage sat closing off the group into a sausage shape. I asked her to stand so that I could give her a place to the side. She complied. I set her chair in place. There was a small sigh of relief from the group. I set out the contexts of the encounter. The Protagonist in her home, he in his. Zerka spoke: "Don, with telephone conversations we have the actors facing ...." I cut in, "You are probably going to say what I am about to do. We have also been taught to have actors back to back when in telephone conversations. Thank you for your care Zerka." I continued without interruption. I was practiced in handling Zerka's interventions and I could be confident of her graciousness. However several group member said later they could not have handled it and had seen others lost for how to respond. Zerka has the method and her techniques and processes so embedded and so readily available as a guide and trainer - not to assist is almost, perhaps absolutely, impossible.

I haven't seen Zerka since but her books from love poems to memoirs and especially her book of conversations with Leif Tag on *surplus reality and healing* have guided me to the heart of Psychodrama.





# Why aren't you dancing?

*Sara Crane*



I have been out for dinner with my husband Simon, my brother Simon, and my sister-in-law and friend Jude. We decide to go to Stranges Lane to listen to Lyndon Puffin, a musician who is going to play at Simon's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in a couple of months' time.

Stranges Lane threads between newly constructed concrete block buildings and hosts a proliferation of small bars and eateries that all face into the narrow corridor of the lane. The lane is a bit cold and not well lit, and it's not easy to tell which establishment is which. We can hear Lyndon playing quietly and make our way towards the bar. It's an odd set up. Lyndon is playing in a little corner on the edge of the corridor like laneway. There are probably about 20 to 30 customers here altogether. They are scattered around at tables, drinking and eating. Most of them seem to be occupied by their phones. The atmosphere is not encouraging.

I ask Simon to dance with me and as soon as I'm moving and smile at Lyndon, I feel better and the energy of his music lifts. I encourage Simon and Jude to dance too and I notice that people are watching us, but no one else gets up to dance.

In this moment, I am conscious of a strong longing to include others in the enjoyment that I am experiencing. I am struck by the way in which Lyndon's energy increases when the audience responds. As I look around, I am sure that at least some of the crowd are on the edge of including themselves in the dance.

I really want to encourage others to dance, so I make a decision to act in a way that will be a challenge for me. If I want to get something going here, I will have to do it fully. It would be easy to let my well-masked shyness and my personal distaste of intrusion to let me off the hook. I will ask every single person 'Why aren't you dancing?' Not in a critical way, but from the role of a friendly inclusive host.

I realize that I will be asking them to take a risk, a risk to be active and expressive. There may be role tests, and my assessment is that many of them have the capacity to rise up. I think they are up for it. I will find out.

I look around and approach the young couple nearest us. They looked friendly and are talking to each other. An easy first encounter. They reply to my query 'We're exhausted after work but we like watching you dance.' And 'We didn't really notice the music until you started dancing, we'll come back.' At this point, I'm realizing that this experiment may take some time. I'm alerted to the fact that I need to be prepared to engage. It's not just a survey.

The man sitting on his own nearest the exit looks up from his phone. 'I don't have anyone to dance with,' he quips. 'Come and dance with me,' I suggest and feel slightly taken aback when jumps up and joins me on the floor space near Lyndon (I can't call it a dance floor. It's part of the corridor.) I enjoy a couple of dances with him and then tell him that I'm going to ask everyone, 'Why aren't you dancing?' He says 'Good on you. I'm going to have another beer.' A little later I notice him waving to me cheerfully as he leaves the lane.

I sit down with a group of young people finishing pizza and beer and ask them, 'Why aren't you dancing?' They want to know why I want to know. I explain that I felt cold and a bit of an outsider when I came in but when I started dancing, I noticed that I enjoyed myself and so did the musician. Two of the guys say 'Why not' and get up. The girls say 'I might later.' I remark that sometimes I feel a bit self-conscious if there's nobody else dancing and then I just focus on the music for a while. One of the girls accepts my tentative doubling. She grins, pushes her plate aside and gets up. Then a couple more of their friends join in.

Next I ask the young man standing up on his own by the wall, 'Why aren't you dancing?' He says he'd love to but he's the security guard. I feel a bit silly and move on to the next table.

One of the young men says that this is his first day in Christchurch and he doesn't know anyone. So I ask where he's from and when he says Denmark, I'm able to introduce him to the Danish girl at the next-door table. This is becoming fun.

I am not nervous anymore so I have another little dance myself before chatting to the next group. Every time I ask 'Why aren't you dancing?' I get a response.

'I can't dance,' says a girl sitting on her own. Her words affect me a great deal. I feel cautious and respond, 'I think I mostly enjoy the music more when I'm dancing but sometimes I just like to listen.' I sit quietly with her and we watch the dancers and listen to the music together until she gets up and goes over to the bar. She turns and smiles at me as I bend down to talk with the group sitting at another table and I smile back. It turns out they are not together. They are simply waiting for food. They seem delighted to meet one another.

By the time I get to the end of the lane, there are more people dancing than not. Even the ones not dancing look more engaged and are connecting with one another. I have made some introductions by asking who they've come with. I've discovered that most of the young people are travellers and together we find out who is from where.

Lyndon is on a roll and the energy is high.

At the end of the evening, we all stand in a circle and sing together for the last number. I feel a strong sense of enjoyment as I look around and take in the warmth of expression through eye contact and holding hands. Everyone is holding hands! People are talking to one another with animation as they move out into the frosty night.

As I look backwards down the corridor, it does not look grey and uninviting. I see a mysterious alleyway full of potential. My perception of the physical space has profoundly altered through my experience.

## Reflections

My whole notion of community has changed since the Christchurch earthquakes. I had previously considered that community grew in a place and was connected to specific groups of people. But in the 2011 earthquake, I lost the central city community in which I had worked, the people, the places, our shared dreams, the things we did together. I felt as if I had lost part of my identity. It is not surprising that I long for a sense of shared community and of belonging, and I recognize that desire in others; the ones who stayed, as well as those who have left their own places of belonging and are travelling through, or settling in, Christchurch.

My current view is that community and a sense of belonging can emerge freely from within any group, and that validity is found in the shared experience and may be fleeting. I speculate about the ways in which I can use this knowledge to create enough connectedness in this new phase of my life, and the ways in which I can co-create this sense of intimacy with others.

I notice how life giving even little snippets of shared experience can be. To take the smallest opportunity to encourage people to connect with one another seems a worthwhile endeavour in the reduction of isolation and in the service of humanity.

I hypothesise that it is possible and worthwhile to create these small opportunities for community and belonging that bring joy and solace, and this may well have a ripple effect. My dream is that people all over the world will become more active sociometrists, highly valuing relationship and having the ability to make intelligent, sensitive and potent interventions. I have a vision of communities celebrating life in relevant ways so that steady relationships and joy are part of the everyday norms.

I am aware that the roles I warm up to are crucial in enabling me to be effective. Openness and flexibility, a playful touch, and attention to emotional tone and timing assist me to follow the warm-up of a group (or a non-group). My over-developed functioning as saviour of the world and mother of all need severe restraints. I have to let go of the 'what ifs', the endless possibility of more.

As I reflect on this experience, the best way I can describe it is that I gave myself and others a spontaneity training workout, and this had a good effect.

Everyone has their own creative style. Maybe J.L., if he'd been there, would have taken over the microphone and *instructed* everyone to dance, and then had them role reverse with one another. My provocation to you is to have a go ...



*Sara Crane is a Psychodramatist, a Trainer Educator Practitioner (TEP, AANZPA) and is a Registered Psychotherapist with a special interest in children and families and has a long-standing involvement in Playback Theatre.*

## BIOCHAR

When plants grow, they take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. When the plants die, the carbon is released back into the atmosphere. However, if the plant mass is converted to charcoal, the carbon that was in the plant can be locked into the soil instead of being released into the atmosphere. Charcoal is made by heating biomass (plant and animal material) in the absence of oxygen. The fumes that are driven off can be fed back to fuel the furnace, and can also be captured to produce high octane fuel. The heat produced can be used to generate electricity.

Charcoal has a very large surface area and provides an excellent habitat for microorganisms which are essential for healthy soils, as well as providing a very large holding capacity for water and nutrients. Charcoal incorporated into soil is known as biochar. Growing tall grass-like crops like corn, sugarcane, sorghum, or giant miscanthus are ideal as they are fast growing and produce excellent quality charcoal.

Biochar is starting to be produced on an industrial scale and operations, large and small, are beginning to spring up all over the world. Some of the world's poorest communities have already benefited by the installation of relatively small biochar production units which supply them with electricity and fuel, enhance their food growing capacity and provide employment. It takes four to eight years to convert desert soil to productive, valuable land. Big companies such as Google, BP, and General Electric are investing in this technology, and the momentum is building.

### Resources

Bates, A. K. (2010). *The biochar solution: Carbon farming and climate change*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

[www.biochar-international.org](http://www.biochar-international.org)

[soilcarbon.org.nz/biochar-the-next-stage-in-climate-action](http://soilcarbon.org.nz/biochar-the-next-stage-in-climate-action)

[www.ted.com/talks/al\\_gore\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_optimism\\_on\\_climate\\_change](http://www.ted.com/talks/al_gore_the_case_for_optimism_on_climate_change)

# Climate change, biochar and community action: An exchange of letters

*Katerina Seligman, Bev Hosking and Martin Putt*

## Katerina's opening letter

Dear friends:

I soothe my soul before sleep by reading the AANZPA journals. They connect me with a large community of brave, fun-loving people doing inspiring, dedicated work to create a better world. They connect me with you. Till last night, I had not thought of writing an article for the journal. My psychodrama work has taken a back seat in recent years, with climate action in the forefront. Phil Carter's (2014) editorial woke me up to the fact that maybe I could write. "Poems are okay," he said. "Stories are okay." "Aesthetics, engagement with the whole being are what is important. Invite the reader into an experience," he says. Maybe I can write something relevant to others in my psychodrama community. A sociometric exploration? A story? Or a simple sharing of this journey with my psychodrama whanau, building on previous work described in my journal article (Seligman, 2011).

Yesterday, I spent many hours researching biochar stories. A new group has arisen in my life. A Biochar Action Group. Suddenly I am encouraged, no longer alone on this biochar journey. Others are working away with me to try to bring this hopeful news to the world. My sister, on watching the half hour video, "Biochar -The Next Stage in Climate Action," said it was the most hopeful thing she had seen in years. My brother wrote, when I sent him some of my biochar writing, "great stuff Kat, keep it up." Encouraging, heart-warming words from a brother who has been brought closer to me than I ever thought possible through our parallel climate change work.

The truth is no longer, in Al Gore's words, "inconvenient," it is terrifying. I know this because I am a scientist at heart and I have studied the science. Intensively. The truth sits in the pit of my stomach like a ball

of dread. It rises to my heart which quickens, and then the fear passes. Life resumes normality: clients, grandchildren, meetings, movies.

I am a lover, a lover of life, a lover of nature. The bush, the natural world, is my church, my cathedral. The thought that it will be further decimated is painful. People are already suffering due to climate change. But haven't people always suffered? The suffering and losses stand to multiply beyond all belief. The biggest part of the tragedy is that it is avoidable. Not by flying less or taking shorter showers. By employing technologies and methods that already exist and need to be given a place of prime importance in the hearts and minds of people.

Perhaps it's because I'm from a holocaust survivor family that I can't let this rest. I know in my bones that bad things don't just happen to other people. I don't want to get on a soap-box, convert people, or champion a cause, but I know that commitment on a massive scale is required.

It's many years now since I intensively studied climate science, hoping to discover that there was not too much to worry about. What I learned shocked and frightened me. I know we are past the point of no return. 350 ppm (parts per million) is the "safe" level of carbon dioxide equivalents in the atmosphere. We are currently 405 ppm and rising exponentially; the "runaway" effect. It is no longer enough to cut carbon emissions to zero. We must take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. And it *is* possible. There are ways to achieve this, but they would take total commitment, from governments, farmers, corporations, from ordinary people everywhere.

For eight years I worked with a climate action group, a wonderful group of friends. Together, with humour and dedication we focussed on many areas, the local, the global, the political, the grass roots, the coal, the oceans, the TPPA. We produced street theatre and songs, and heart-warming meetings. On the downside, dozens of depressing emails and links came into my in-box daily, dragging my spirit through the dirt. It was a liberation to step down from this group, to decide to focus on just one thing, one solution, one area that offers hope - biochar. And so our Biochar Action Group came into being.

To reverse climate change, biochar and other known solutions would have to be employed on a massive scale, seemingly an impossible pipe-dream. But as I live with the terrifying truth that climate change is poised



to escalate out of control, I am reminded of Zerka Moreno's final words in her book *To Dream Again*: "the impossible does happen."

I'd love to know your response,

Katerina.

## Bev

Dear Katerina – I am writing to you on a remarkably warm, beautiful, autumn day, one of a string of unseasonably, warm days in Wellington this year. They have been compellingly enjoyable, and at the same distinctly disturbing, as it is hard not to notice such a change in the weather pattern and to link this to an immediate and worrying experience of climate change.

Thanks for your letter and for inviting me into conversation with you. I have enjoyed hearing from you and I am very interested in your recent discoveries, both about biochar and also your shift in warm-up, based on the need to work in ways that are life giving and sustainable. Facing and working with the truths about climate change certainly are a big challenge to this.

I have been online to look at the video you refer to and to get some further information. It is so very heartening to hear that there is at least one technology that can have such a rebalancing effect. I love the fact that it not only can remove carbon from the atmosphere, but it is so beneficial to plant life. That is really exciting. I also have so many questions, such as, "Do you have such a machine? Are there folk in your area getting together to develop a community-size version? Are you working to get government to take up this solution?" Practically, I am currently planning to ask my nephew, who is an engineer, whether he might be able to make such a machine for myself and my friends/neighbours to begin to use – it looks reasonably simple as technology goes, from my view as a non-techno person.

I have also been interested in questions of process, and wondering which of your sociodramatic and sociometric abilities you have been applying as you are involved with these groups and this issue?

I have been grappling with this myself – where and how to make interventions in current social, cultural, political global issues of which this is such a major and urgent one. I have been seeking out ways that I can bring to bear some of this very powerful method that we have spent years training ourselves in.

The world is such a different place from the 1960's to 1980's when I was much more active politically and the experience of protest was on the streets with hundreds/thousands of others. Now, there is so much more readily available information about what is happening, but I have found it challenging to see and feel groups gathering around such issues in creative ways, where I feel I could make a contribution. This was what I found myself experiencing, so I decided that this was where I needed to start, and not disregard or leap over this awareness.

This has led me to experimenting, in recent years, with a few different colleagues to invite folk to conversations where we can bring forward what is important to us. At different times and in various combinations, we have used group work, playback theatre, sociodrama, sociometry, as well as sitting together with folk, talking and listening, with a strong focus on listening. We have worked to open out areas of interest and concern and to explore what is of significance to those present.

We have often set up the conversations with an invitation for the same group to meet for two consecutive evenings, or three evenings, a week apart, so that a more reflective and substantial conversation can take place. In this work to date, we have had a high value in working with emergent themes, building out from what folk have brought forward as important at the current time and place, and so far climate change has not come to the fore. This is of interest to me, however I have not investigated it in any depth. I imagine it is because of a fear of overwhelm and helplessness, which are some of the feelings that have been expressed when climate change has surfaced as a theme in sociodrama training events. The groups have then gone onto work with this in some creative ways.

In our work, we have intentionally taken action to come to know something of the complexity of various situations. As we have done this we have worked to hold off feelings of urgency and to avoid orienting to solutions or particular outcomes. This has been quite challenging. We have wanted to open out spaces where we can think together in ways that go beyond opinion and debate.

From J. L. Moreno, and from my own experience, I have learned again and again that the face to face relationship is extremely important. I have seen how much folk love being together with others in these settings, how there is such a longing for a deeper connection with others around things that matter to us. We have had a focus on listening and experiencing being affected by one another.

At the time, it has not always been clear what folk have gained from this sort of being together, although enjoyment, deep satisfaction and stimulation have been expressed at these events. However, a significant surprise element has been that when folk go away they are often moved to action. Sometimes a call to action happens at the end of such a gathering, but more frequently we later hear reports that folk have taken some action, small or large, that is of real significance to them in their personal, social and political settings. We have witnessed the role of citizen being animated.

As I write, I am wondering whether the time together assists us to think and feel about things in a way that we cannot do on our own, as it is often overwhelming. As a result of this way of being together, we are empowered to act. This is in line with Moreno's idea that the psychodrama methods he developed would enable us to move from being passive to being active as members of society.

Warmly as always,

Bev.

### **Katerina**

Kia ora Bev,

It is heartening to me to have you engage with me so willingly on this topic.

Our Biochar Action Group came about via the process of something called, "The Community Game, Motueka," a weekend event in which I participated earlier this year, where people from the community presented projects and had others join them. We participated in collaborative, game-like exercises with the goal of learning a variety of ways for groups to work smarter and faster, to meet their community's needs and aspirations. Throughout the weekend, we were treated to videos of inspiring real-life success stories, where small groups achieved seemingly impossible goals by collaborating with each other. It was a very rewarding weekend and our action group was born. We did not engage in the deep sharing that occurs in your groups, Bev, but I think it would be very worthwhile to do so.

The groups you have been conducting, where you invite people into important conversations, sounds totally relevant. Clearly heart-warming, strengthening, life-enhancing connections and insights are made. I know that face-to-face encounters, with acceptance, is by far the best way,

maybe the only way, that people make shifts in their consciousness. I love your statement that “animation of citizens comes from being together with people with enjoyment, deep satisfaction and stimulation.” As you say, helplessness and overwhelm are the greatest obstacles to people engaging. It is also something about the nature of the climate threat we are facing ... it is mostly so invisible and not immediately threatening to most people, or so it seems.

In our Biochar Action Group, I think my psychodrama background, and grounding in sociodrama and sociometry, supports me in my roles as out-reacher, net-worker, connector and educator. It is with forty years of psychodrama experiences in my bones that I feel supported and confident enough to strive for planetary healing. But I am still daunted by the thought of taking the next step of going deeper, with larger groups of people, on this subject.

I am coming to a place of acceptance of how things are in relation to climate change, that most likely we are past the point of return, feeling the sadness of that, and sometimes the fear, and still enjoying life and maintaining hope that there is a positive way forward. There are millions of people on the planet going all-out to find solutions and intent on creating a sustainable and just world. Whether these efforts will succeed or fail is not really the point for me. The point is to keep on *as if* success is possible. To quote Zerka Moreno again, “the impossible does happen.”

I'd like to briefly answer your questions about whether we have a biochar-making machine, whether we have a community of people involved, and whether we are taking action with the Government about these issues. Our group does have a number of ways of making charcoal on a very small scale. The process is called *pyrolysis*, and the machine used is a furnace called a *pyrolyser*. We have done site visits to furnaces that produce charcoal on a large scale and are currently looking into ways we might acquire one.

We have a man in our small group with practical engineering skills, several with a great deal of theoretical and practical know-how, some people with business experience, and a soil biologist. We are thinking perhaps at first we might make use of the char produced at a huge MDF plant in our area, to first try and get biochar onto people's radars. To build something big enough to deal with the massive amount of orchard and forest waste in our area would take a lot of money, and people willing to work on the project full time. There are business opportunities there, and we are exploring how we might make the most of them.

As far as getting the government to engage with this 'biochar solution', we have made small, and, so far, apparently unsuccessful outreaches to government personnel, so we need to focus more on this aspect. Within our otherwise very busy lives it's challenging to find time to do it all. I struggle to accept that what I am doing is enough, but I am not willing to do more. I have a Gandhi quote on my wall: "Almost everything you do may seem insignificant, but it is important that you do it."

With warm wishes and appreciation,

Katerina.

## **Martin**

Dear Katerina and Bev,

Jasper, my son, is 12 years old now. When he was 10, he wrote his first speech for school about plastic bags killing our sea life. He loves birds and sea creatures and he cared that humans hurt them, by their littering and using so many plastic bags. He looked things up on Google and found facts that he could use: islands of plastic the size of Texas marauding in our oceans; 40,000 plastic shopping bags dumped in NZ landfills every *hour*.

We watched Martin Luther King's *I have a dream* on YouTube. He said, "I have a dream Dad, that every time people go to the beach, they pick up some other people's litter." Into the speech that went. He learnt it off by heart. He won his school speech contest. We realised in him, then, a marriage of passion and talent. He cared, and he wanted his audience to hear what he cared about, and change, take on his dream. That he did well, of course, we were proud parents; but that he expressed something nascent, accepted the input of auxiliaries, and yet was determined it be his original work and that, when the moment came, he rose up out of himself, onto the stage and into the world. This moved me beyond measure.

From the idea to the enactment, the road is paved with distraction, obstacles and fears. From the supervision office, the toilet seat pondering, the late night conversation, the potency to move forward as an animateur, as a producer with our method and training in tow, this can seem an insurmountable act of courage. Without this spontaneity being catalysed, we can't develop, we can't effect change, we can't express what is possible. If we wait for the wind to fly our kite, if we wait for a model, someone who has gone before, shown us how it is done, we are

on the back foot, passive, stewing. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, or as you quote Zerka, “the impossible does happen.”

When I heard the scientists and innovators speaking about biochar in the video you encouraged, I thought of the beginning of their thinking, the eureka moments, the courage to conceive, to not be overwhelmed, to dream an impossible dream. Biochar seems counter intuitive, in that not only can we sequester and lock away carbon emissions by heating plant material, but that we can convert it into bio fuels and charcoal, which then radically enhances the soil, providing income and sustainability to the subsistent poor, and moves us toward averting climate-based disaster. Thinking neurobiologically, relationships are enhanced by their rupture followed by their repair, creating stronger bonds. If we can bear our anxiety, we generate spontaneity and creativity, and vice versa. Spontaneity begets spontaneity. The overwhelm that arises, as we face climate dread and ever more evidence, statistics and bad news about the imminent disaster that is upon us in the world, can bring depression, anxiety, despair and inaction to even the most intelligent and active amongst us. And still, in spite of this, humanity seeks solutions and genius abounds.

Back to Jasper, because of his parents’ whanaungatanga, a chance encounter in a café, and the wish from the environmental movement to hear the voice of youth, he was invited to repeat his speech in Aotea Square, in the heart of Auckland, at the end of the People’s Climate March in 2014. Oh how nervous and excited we were. The moment before he was announced, I looked at him, and I don’t know why, said, “are you sure about this Jasper? He looked at me, cool as a cucumber, and said, “I’m fine Dad.” He was a rock star.

The following year he was invited back, barely days before the event, this time to address 15,000 people in Albert Park before the biggest ever NZ climate march, as part of the global demonstration for the UN’s COP21. He wrote a new speech for the march, ending with the chant he’d learnt the year previous, marching up Queen Street, “*So people, what do we want? - Climate Action - When do we want it? - Now!*” This was his rallying cry, repeating it over the PA till everyone was chanting, before pouring onto the street to march. This is the same boy who hates spiders and bugs and won’t take the compost out because of them.

So Katerina and Bev, here you are, here we are, finding ways to maintain spontaneity, to generate encounters and solutions, rather than

despair or terror, despite complexity or welcoming complexity both, despite, Katerina, your deep knowledge as a scientist of just what the indicators point to. In responding to you, I have thought close-to-home, to what is with me currently, and to the simple inspiration that comes in the hearts and minds of young people who inherit the best and the worst of us, individually and collectively.

Jasper is writing his next school speech, as he gets older and has experiences under his belt it is now not without increased anxiety. We asked him what he thought he'd make his speech about this time, for intermediate school.

He said, "humanity."

"Oh, okay. That sounds good, what about humanity?"

"Well, that things about humanity are bad, but they are good at the same time, like the police in America shoot black people and there's mass killings and lots of people are being killed in wars and it's terrible, but there are many people that are inspiring and kind-hearted, and make things with science and technology like seed robots and movies and things that change the world."

"Okay, that sounds like a good idea for a speech."

We spent time today working on it, arguing, giving up, feeling blocked, googling things, enjoying each other and frustrating each other, me, at times a good auxiliary, other times pathetic.

"It's not your speech Dad, it's mine. I want to say what I want to say ... I want to end how I started, by saying, *Humanity: it's a sad but beautiful existence.*"

"Okay darling, it's your speech."

## **Katerina**

Kia ora Martin,

I found your response to my conversation with Bev both moving and hope-inspiring. It's wonderful to me that people as young as Jasper are engaging with the big challenges of our times. And I am in awe of your parenting which has produced such a switched-on young person.

As psychodramatists, we are immersed in a methodology which assists people to deal with blocks and unleash spontaneity, and as you say, spontaneity begets spontaneity! I love your reflections on the

beginning moments of an idea: the 'eureka' moments, the courage to conceive, to not be overwhelmed, to dream an impossible dream.

I recommend reading Joanna Macy (2007, 2012). Macy re-frames for me the depression, anxiety, despair, and helplessness that arise in response to seemingly impossible odds in turning the climate threat around. She emphasises that all of these emotions are a part of the process of warming up to action. They are not morbid. Rather, she says, they are a measure of a person's willingness to engage with the truth and feel compassion for all of creation.

Carbon sequestration using biochar is not simple. The more I learn the more complex I find it can be. But it *is* possible, it *is* being done, it *does* offer solutions. Your words inspire courage and determination in me. So here's to complexity and to keeping on keeping on!

With warm wishes to you and Jasper. Please pass on my heartfelt congratulations to him.

Katerina.



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**Katerina Seligman** was born in post-war Prague, Czechoslovakia, and emigrated to Melbourne with her family when the Stalin regime took hold in 1948. She gained an M.Sc. degree at Melbourne University and moved to Aotearoa in 1975. In about 1980, she changed careers and later qualified as a psychodramatist and psychodrama trainer. She continues to work as a counsellor, group-worker and clinical supervisor from her home in Motueka. She is an active grandmother, a keen tramper and has worked for many years in environmental protection, especially in the area of climate mitigation.



**Bev Hosking** is a role trainer and TEP. She is experienced in active methods that aim to promote social dialogue and cohesive communities and is committed to bringing spontaneity and creativity to all aspects of life and work. She is currently the Executive Director of the Wellington Psychodrama Training Institute and a member of the AANZPA Board of Examiners.

**Martin Putt** is a psychodramatist and registered psychotherapist living in Westmere, Auckland with his partner, Clare, and son, Jasper. He works part time in private practice and part time in a hospital-based forensic secure care setting. In his practice, he tends to see men and boys on a one-to-one basis, oftentimes related to sexually problematic behaviour and other more general difficulties in living satisfying lives. Martin is currently the Secretary of the AANZPA executive. He grows a garden and keeps bees at home.





# **It's not so lonely on the stairs now: Linking the personal, the professional and the psychodramatic technique of doubling in professional boundary training**

*Wendy McIntosh*

## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on three ways in which my personal development journey has informed my work delivering individual and group training regarding the transgression of professional boundaries by health clinicians. The first aspect is the link between the experience of boundary violation in childhood and the motivation to work as a professional boundary trainer. The second element is the link between the experience of isolation as a result of childhood boundary violation, and my valuing of the psychodramatic technique of doubling in professional boundary training to enrich clinicians' understandings of themselves and their transgressions. The third thread encompasses the significance of psychodrama in helping me to integrate the personal and the professional, and thus conduct meaningful professional boundary training.

## **Sitting on the stairs**

I am eight years of age. I sit alone on the internal staircase in my family home. I can hear the raised voices of my parents and four of their friends in the living room below. The voices are raised in passionate discussion and intermittently drop into singing. I experience a jumble of emotions and thoughts. So much is going on inside my eight year old body. I am in a heightened state of distress. I want to share the confusion, anxiety and fear that I am experiencing about so many things that are affecting me, including my experience of boundary violation, yet I do not know who will hear my story. I am afraid and believe I have no-one to whom I can talk. No one sits on the stairs with me. I am alone. I am isolated. This is what I knew as a child.

As a psychodrama trainee, I now know that what I was missing on the stairs was a double. I had no supportive companion, or double, with whom I could share my stories and experiences. I have also come to appreciate that the experience of sitting alone on the stairs when I was eight years old is significant in what has become my professional passion, working with health clinicians who have transgressed professional boundaries. It has taken a long time to recognise the threads that have been weaving together to link my childhood experiences of boundary violation and isolation, my drive to work as a professional boundary trainer, and the significance of psychodrama and the psychodramatic technique of doubling to assist clinicians who have transgressed professional boundaries

### **Sitting on a bridge**

During a cathartic moment in my psychodrama peer group, I gained valuable insight into my drive and passion to use doubling in exploring the area of professional boundaries with health clinicians.

It was my psychodrama peers who supported me when a painful bridge between my personal and professional experiences regarding boundary violation was revealed during a supervision session. With a fellow trainee directing, I sat on the bridge that I had created on the psychodrama stage using cushions and fabrics. I chose a companion to sit with me on this bridge between my child and adult selves. During role reversals with this companion, who at different times acted as my double, I began to understand and appreciate the warm-up informing my passion for the area of professional boundaries. My double spoke words, held deeply within me, which had never before been expressed regarding childhood boundary violation, and the feelings of shame and guilt associated with it, that I had carried from a young age. As Fisher (2009) maintained, "Drawing on intuitive knowledge, the double begins to tune into the inner world of the protagonist" (p. 26). Behold, the sky did not fall down. The earth did not gobble me up. Rather, I saw only love and acceptance in the gaze of my double. I was held safely in that gaze and my body sighed with relief. The insights I gained that day in my peer group opened up greater spontaneity and the possibility of using doubling in the professional boundaries work I did with clients. That thread continues today in my current work, running workshops and one to one sessions with health professionals who have transgressed boundaries in their clinical roles. My psychodrama supervisor Diz stimulated me to reflect further on my commitment to this area of work.

She asked, "What is it that keeps you going with the work?" At the time, I did not have an answer. Now, with that memory of myself sitting alone on the stairs, I am clearer. I am in the process of self-forgiveness. I am re-writing my own story. Every time I work with a client or deliver a workshop on boundaries, I challenge my own story. Each insight gained becomes a new part of my story.

As a professional who supports clinicians and as a psychodrama trainee who has grappled with a thesis, writing about professional boundaries has been challenging. So many of the stories told to me by clinicians, such as an attempt to set limits in a relationship with an authority figure, the experience of isolation when a trusted relationship is violated and the sense of shame associated with professional transgression, have resonated in different ways. Through work in psychodrama training groups and discussions with peers and trainers, I have begun to shed past shame determinately held onto. I am developing capacity to appreciate and enjoy what I bring to the world.

As I reflect on what has assisted me in this endeavour, the act of being doubled stands out. Clayton (1993) stated, "If the enactment indicated that the man was having great difficulty accepting himself, then the use of a double would be good" (p. 59). The appreciation I have felt when I have been doubled has led me to reflect that doubling may possibly have been a missing ingredient for clinicians in relation to professional boundaries and authority. I have also been reminded that the act of writing itself acts as a double. Carter (2015) noted, "The writing process is a sort of doubling process in your self. It's like a production. Instead of actually producing the action on the stage you've produced it on paper" (p. 3).

## **Early reflections regarding the transgression of professional boundaries**

It is 1982 and as part of my psychiatric nurse training I am on clinical placement in an acute admission unit. I am tasked with the close observation of a young male patient, which involves him being within arms distance of me. He is 19 years old and I am 22. I experience the torment of both his wakeful and sleeping world. He moves restlessly on the bed during his sleep and calls out. He startles awake, sits up, looks around, notes that I am still there and settles once more to sleep, whereupon his body moves restlessly again. As I sit on a chair beside his bed, I reflect on his experience. He is so alone. I wonder might he settle better were I to lie on his bed and hold him. However, I do not follow

through with this idea. I have been taught to be wary of physical contact with patients, especially male patients. I continue to sit beside him, conflicted. The disturbing motive to hold him conflicts with the reactive fear of collegial retribution. Now, almost 30 years later, I remember the scene and am still haunted by my ambivalence and inability to act.

As a psychiatric nursing student, I was caught up in the procedures and language we had been taught to use. We were to ease the patient's distress through medication. That seemed simple enough, except that as I sat with this young man I saw that medication was not the solution to his distress. Even under sedation, his mind and body were restless. Furthermore, I have come to realise the significance of transference and counter transference in professional boundaries. I can now look back at the younger Wendy and realise that she wanted to hold the young patient because that is what she had wanted when she had felt alone after being abused. She had wanted to be held during her nightmares and protected from them. When I warm up to the psychodramatist in me, doubling emerges as an effective intervention that I could have used with the patient at that time. I did not need to hold him. That was my need. However, through the act of doubling I may have been able to validate his experience and assist him to express the internalised struggle. As a more experienced clinician I can also appreciate that by not holding him I retained an emotional distance that allowed safety for both him and I.

As students and novice practitioners, health professionals generally have not received adequate modelling about professional boundaries. A recent conversation with a new client confirmed this for me. The client, a nurse, had developed a personal relationship with a person who she had nursed in a mental health unit. She informed her unit manager (UM) about the relationship. The response from the UM was centred on the need not to worry, "what you do in your own time is your own business." Reassured by her UM and unable to locate policies on professional boundaries in her unit or organisation, the nurse continued with the relationship. However, her regulator body is now investigating her actions. Perhaps a more adequate response from this UM might have constituted curiosity about the relationship or the reasons that the nurse sought her UM's counsel.

Professional boundary transgressions in the clinical arena have at times been met with blame, shame and punishment within a hierarchical punitive culture. I suspect this will be the case for the nurse. She will be professionally punished for her actions, and this will have an added

intensity as the client concerned has also made a complaint against her to the regulatory body. I argue for a more spontaneous response from the profession in terms of assisting the individual practitioner to understand what has occurred in their relationship with the other. Specifically, when clinicians mirror and double one another regarding boundary transgressions, benefits are likely to flow in terms of a reduction of shaming and blaming, and an increase in understanding and transforming professional behaviour.

## **The power of doubling to generate new insights**

I use psychodramatic doubling to good effect in my current work with health clinicians who have transgressed professional boundaries. This technique enables clinicians to generate insights and validation amidst the confusion and conflict that comes with complaints regarding professional transgressions. For many of them, the therapeutic and educational work they do as a result of transgressions taps into their original social and cultural atoms, where there has been little or no adequate doubling.

*When a protagonist requires building up a double may be able to confirm a protagonist in their adequate functioning just by their physical presence. The protagonist immediately hears their own expression mirrored back to them, is pleased with what they are hearing, and with what they themselves have just said, and breaks an old patterns of doubting their expression and trying to undo it. Thus the double can be a powerful force for good through bringing about in individuals a confident and flowing expressiveness.*  
Clayton (1992, p. 84)

In what follows I will describe the use of doubling, amongst other psychodramatic techniques, with three health clinicians with whom I worked at the request of their regulatory organisations.

### **Jane: The self-protecting lizard**

Jane, a health professional in her fifties, had worked as a clinician for over thirty years when her position was terminated and her registration cancelled due to professional boundary transgressions. A condition set by the regulatory board for the re-instatement of registration stipulated that Jane complete a year long educational course focused on professional boundaries. It was under these circumstances that I began what has become three years professional engagement with Jane. She had experienced a punishing culture within her employment and professional organisations, felt angry and “let down” by them, and was under the care

of a psychiatrist and a psychologist. Although it was clear that our work would be educational rather than therapeutic, I was aware of the value of exploring childhood experiences in order to understand the vulnerability and risk for an individual in terms of boundary transgressions.

### ***Initial meetings with Jane***

In my work with previous clients, I have learnt the importance of taking time to establish rapport and trust so that the work is beneficial for the individual. I was therefore not going to rush the establishment of the relationship or the learning with Jane. In our first session, I warmed up to the role of *considered gentle explorer*, keen to hear Jane's interpretation of the events that had led to the loss of professional registration. In telling the story, she included her post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis and her suicide attempt after losing registration. The identity of health professional was essential to Jane, and the loss of that professional role intolerable. As she told her story, it became clear to me that adequate doubling had been absent in Jane's childhood. Thus in this initial session, and in subsequent sessions, I doubled Jane. I became a *naïve inquirer* and *gentle social investigator*, roles adequately matched to her developmental stage. This intervention saw Jane progress from *careful storyteller* to *reflective life reviewer*.

Throughout the next few sessions, Jane shared the ways in which, during childhood, she had witnessed domestic violence perpetrated by her father towards her mother. She also described the physical, emotional and psychological abuse she had experienced from her father, including the many times he had humiliated her in private and when colleagues were present. Jane's mother had failed to intervene to protect her daughter, and Jane rationalised this failure in that whilst her father was abusing her, the mother was spared. Following is an excerpt from one such session.

**Wendy:** *Warm up to examples of boundary transgressions at work that you have been reported for.*

**Jane:** [considering the male colleague who reported her, projects top half of body forwards, face flushed, voice raised, tongue moving across lips] *He's stupid. All males are stupid.*

I mirror and double Jane's words and actions.

**Jane:** *Yes that's it. That's what I do. I didn't know that's what I did. He [male colleague] said I was rude and unprofessional.*



**Wendy:** *When you see yourself in action, what image do you have?*

**Jane:** *I am a lizard.*

**Wendy:** *What kind of lizard?*

**Jane:** *I am protecting myself. I am a self-protecting lizard. I lunge forward and attack.*

**Wendy:** *Notice yourself as you warm up to this self-protecting lizard.*

**Jane:** *This role served me well as a child with my father when he was ranting at me. It does not serve me as well as an adult. In fact, being a self-protecting retaliating lizard significantly contributed to my being fired.*

**Jane:** [body stilled, sitting back in chair, placing left hand over right hand on lap, looking back at me, taking her time] *In the face of Dad's rants, I became a quick thinking smart mouth. [pause] I think he liked it that I did not back down. [pausing momentarily, eyes open, small smile, nodding] When I am under pressure at work, put down or stressed, then being a retaliating lizard comes to the fore. I had not realised this is what I do.*

At the time of this scenario, the relationship between Jane and myself was mutually positive and strengthening. My assessment was that I could progress from companionable doubling to self-revealing mirroring. However, during other sessions it was clear that the role of self-protecting lizard remained on the rock 'waiting to pounce'. When I doubled Jane at those times, expressing inner dialogue that she found difficult to verbalise, she was always able to laugh and appreciate the significance of the role for her. More significantly, Jane warmed up to spontaneous expression and tried out new roles.

### ***Recent encounters with Jane***

In recent sessions, Jane reports a significant progressive change in the way in which she engages with colleagues and clients in terms of professional boundaries. She is more able to pause and begin a process of inquiry within herself regarding her reactivity in response to incoming data. This progress is illustrated below through two enactments where Jane is informed by a carer that another carer has provided incorrect care to a client. The first is drawn from a past session with me and the second from a recent session.

**Jane:** [reacting immediately, quick marching towards carer, raising an accusatory voice, face reddening] *What are you doing you stupid idiot?*

**Jane:** [coaching herself] *Slow down, breath.* [measured walking towards carer, voice soft and inquiring]

In this more recent enactment, Jane has a less reactive warm-up to the information that a carer is not providing correct care. Through the psychodramatic technique of doubling, she has learnt the value of breathing and slowing down her responses, and this learning has translated into the embodiment of progressive professional roles. We reflect together about the progress she has made, which is a significant development in itself. During past workshops, Jane would quickly spurn any positive feedback that came her way, flushing deeply, covering her face, looking away or withdrawing chin and head deeply into the chest.

**Wendy:** [noting the changes in Jane's response to positive feedback] *I am delighting in the changes I see in you. You look much easier with yourself.*

**Jane:** [returning my look, smiling, chin moving down slightly] *It is good to get positive feedback about what I am doing. I did not get praised much as a child. I was always told how stupid I was. I feel more controlled now. I feel better in myself.*

Recently, as part of the publication permission giving process, Jane read the content of this section. On finishing, she looked at me and said, "Yes. You can include my story. It is good to see the progress I have made written down. It is true the lizard does not come out as often now."

Jane's regulatory board has reinstated her professional registration and she now holds a new clinical role in another organisation. In the current organisation, Jane experiences support rather than fear of punishment and is therefore more willing to try out different ways of interacting with colleagues. I continue to see her once a month and she remains dedicated to developing new role responses to stressful situations at work. Based on my assessment of her stage of development, level of spontaneity and ability to warm up readily, and our positive sociometry, I produced a series of role training sessions. Jane's spontaneity continued to rise and she enacted and named new role responses to meet distressing and sometimes belittling scenarios at work. I encourage her development as a role analyst. She finds role naming unifying and fun, as well as enabling her to develop some detachment. She can self-reflect without being self-demeaning. She is a wondrous discoverer and heroic learner.

## Jeff: Holding my ground

Jeff is a health professional, directed by his regulatory organisation to attend professional boundaries education for demonstrating inappropriate behaviour towards female colleagues. In the initial interview organised to determine the type of education that would be of most benefit, Jeff is shy, unsure and concerned that his behaviour towards colleagues has been perceived as inappropriate. He confesses that he feels awkward and intimidated in the company of females, unsure what to say to them. I take time in this session to allow Jeff space to experience being heard as he brings forward his concerns. I do not ridicule or judge him. I ask questions to deepen his reflective responses further. In discussion together, Jeff and I decide that his participation in three individual sessions and a two day professional boundaries workshop led by myself would be the most beneficial approach. It is now the second day of this workshop and Jeff is on the psychodrama stage, concretising with objects and fabric, themes that he had been discussing earlier in the workshop. I notice that as he places the themes on the stage, he displays greater bodily ease than he did during our initial individual session. He smiles, a delighted playful self-presenter. As I tune in to Jeff's warm-up, a drama emerges.

**Jeff:** [body still, head down, shoulders slumped, voice quiet] *It is hard when the system expects so much and does not give us the resources.*

**Wendy:** *Who can come and mirror this to Jeff?*

Deirdre, a psychodrama colleague who works with me, walks slowly towards Jeff, stands before him and mirrors the words and postures that he had enacted.

**Jeff:** [looking at his mirrored self, eyes tearful, shoulders still slumped, body shuddering] *Nobody should feel like that at work. I just try to do the best I can.*

Deirdre has executed the mirroring well. Her "portrayal had an air of reality," was "done with conviction" and "carried weight" (Clayton, 1992, p. 27), assisting Jeff to become more aware of his inner experience. I am deeply affected by Jeff's warm-up and wonder if he has previously experienced such mirroring in the world.

**Wendy:** [standing beside Jeff and mirroring his tone of voice and posture] *Nobody should feel like this at work.*

Jeff continues to look at, and stay in relation to, his mirrored self.

**Wendy:** *This is a significant place right now Jeff. Are you interested to keep exploring here?*

**Jeff:** *Yes. I want to hold my ground. I want to talk to my Team Leader, set limits with her.*

As an involved and purposeful director, I invite Jeff to choose a double. He selects the participant with whom he was paired earlier. The double takes up a position slightly behind Jeff and enacts Jeff's role. As Jeff looks at his double, his shoulders relax and a small smile appears on his face. I then direct Jeff to choose an auxiliary to take up the role of his Team Leader. He points to a member of the group and I direct her to stand on the stage in a position selected by Jeff. Jeff immediately begins to engage with his Team Leader.

**Jeff:** *I cannot do everything you ask me to do. There is not enough time.*

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles with your Team Leader.*

I then conduct a brief interview with Jeff as the Team Leader. She states that she also has expectations to meet and that everyone on the team should pull their weight.

**Wendy to Team Leader:** *Express this to Jeff in the way you usually do.*

**Jeff as Team Leader:** [planting feet firmly on the ground, back straight, looking Jeff in the eye, clear strong voice] *You need to do better. What you do is not enough.*

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles.*

Jeff is silent. He stands with his head down and holds his hands in front of himself.

**Wendy:** *Talk to your double.*

**Jeff:** *I don't know what to say. She sounds angry. I feel like a child.*

**Double:** [encouragingly] *It is hard when I feel like this. I don't know what to say, what to do. I wonder what would happen if I just moved my body slightly ...*

In this moment, the double moves beyond expressing what has been expressed or unexpressed and initiates movement in her body and Jeff responds to this, his spontaneity increases.

**Jeff:** [also beginning to move, arms loosening by sides, shoulders straightening, clear unconflicted voice] *I know what I want to say.*

**Wendy:** *Express yourself to your Team Leader.*

**Jeff to Team Leader:** [squaring shoulders, feet slightly apart, looking across at supervisor] *I would like you to be specific about what you want me to do better. I am unclear of your request.*

With a few more role reversals between Jeff and his Team Leader which include consultations with his double, Jeff stands upon the stage, self-possessed.

**Jeff:** [strong loud voice] *I have never been able to hold my ground before. This has been good for me. I have options now.*

As I sit with Jeff during the sharing phase of the drama, I experience a warmth in him, a self-appreciating nurturer who I had not seen before in our work together. As the other participants share their experiences as auxiliaries and as audience members, I notice tears well up in Jeff's eyes. I encourage him to keep expressing himself. He shifts slightly in the chair and then looks around the group. He says, "I have never felt this accepted before." He rests back in his chair.

## **Fiona: I Want To Grow Some Balls**

Fiona is a health professional of 10 years. Her regulatory organisation directed her to attend professional boundary training because she had developed a personal relationship with a male patient that included him lending Fiona a significant amount of money. The initial interview between Fiona and myself determined the specific objectives of her training, as well as the decision that she attend three individual sessions and a two day workshop.

It is day one of the workshop, Fiona has participated in large and small group discussions and acted as an auxiliary in some of the dramas, but has expressed little regarding her particular reasons for attending. Towards the end of the day, as I invite all participants to reflect on their learnings and identify their aims for the second day, Fiona brings herself forward. She says, "I'm so soft. I don't have walls up. I don't know what I should do. I flip out of the safe therapeutic zone into the drowning zone. Tomorrow I want to learn resilience, be strong, stubborn. I need to grow balls. I get walked over. I need to grow strong, resilient." Fiona then makes the commitment to explore this area in a psychodrama on day two, the title of which is 'I Want to Grow Some Balls'.

The next day, I invite Fiona to join me on the stage. As we clarify the purpose of her work, it becomes apparent that she has retained the focus

on developing strength and resilience. I am aware, through the content of this interview and a previous individual session, that Fiona experienced domestic violence, isolation and loneliness during the years of her marriage, and that she is now separated. I also know that the relationship with the patient developed partly in response to her inability to manage personal distress.

Fiona re-creates the scene in which, having told him of her struggles to pay her bills, the patient offers to lend her money. He is in a hospital bed and she is providing nursing care. I invite Fiona to take up the role of the patient and conduct an interview. As the patient, Fiona says that she, Fiona, is a kind professional, one of the best working in that facility. Concerned that she is distressed about a shortage of cash and failing to see anything wrong in it, he wants to help by loaning her money.

**Fiona as patient:** [holding out envelope] *I have some money for you. I know you have some bills to pay. Here it is.*

Reverse roles. Fiona becomes herself. As auxiliary takes up the functioning of the patient.

At this point, Fiona steps towards the patient with her hand extended. From our previous discussions, I am aware that she does not want to refuse the offer for fear of upsetting him. In the past, her husband had punished her for refusing his attention. I am also mindful of Fiona's stated wish to change these old patterns of relating, in her words 'to develop balls'. I inquire of Fiona her purpose at this moment.

**Fiona:** *I don't have a purpose. I am reacting to his offer.*

**Wendy:** *Have a chat with your double. See if you can figure out something else.*

**Fiona:** [turning to double] *This is what I do. I just react. Someone says jump, I jump. I am tired of jumping. I want to say no, stop, enough.*

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles with your double.*<sup>1</sup>

**Fiona as Double:** *This is an old story. You get stuck. I am wondering if we should just start doing something different. It could be risky though.*

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is some debate regarding role reversal with a double, my intention here is to deepen the protagonist's warm-up and strengthen her relationship with herself as she grapples with the conflict between her personal and professional conduct.

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles.*

**Fiona:** [voice rising] *What if he gets angry? What if he shouts at me? I will be in trouble.*

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles.*

**Fiona as Double:** *Yes we have to consider that.* [pausing, then speaking with louder voice] *We're developing balls here. Others will get upset. So what? This is about us.*

**Wendy:** *Reverse roles.*

**Fiona:** *I don't know. What if I get punished?*

I have noticed a new quality in Fiona's voice, a strength, a steeliness, that was not previously there. I act on a hunch.

**Wendy:** *Fiona, I noticed you were very interested in what your double was saying. I noticed a movement in your body. It got straighter when your double said "we're developing balls here."*

**Fiona:** [laughing] *It sounded so good to hear it. I liked it ... words I've thought so much and not expressed before.*

I enjoy Fiona appreciating herself and encourage her to keep going.

**Wendy:** *On you go in your interaction with the client.*

**Fiona:** [standing alongside double, wiggling body then straightening up, holding hands to sides, taking deep breath] *It is a kind gesture. I will not accept your money.*

The audience cheers and Fiona smiles. I direct her to engage in several more role reversals with the client to assist her to strengthen her resolve in the face of his attempts to have Fiona accept the money. When Fiona falters, her double coaches her. "I think we need to think about this and have a yarn." I comment to Fiona my observation that each time her double supports her in this way, her body relaxes.

During a follow-up individual session, Fiona reflected on the changes that she had experienced as a result of this psychodrama. She claimed a clearer sense of herself in relation to others, was better able to set appropriate boundaries with colleagues and clients, and found herself less reactive and more thoughtful in her expressions and actions. Fiona knew that these progressive developments were challenging most in the company of males and especially in the relationship with her ex-husband. With me alternating between director, auxiliary and double, Fiona worked to set and hold personal boundaries in the relationship

with her ex-husband. While experiencing significant fear and anxiety, she held her ground even when that ground felt shaky. In our final session together, Fiona envisaged a future where she would be frequently challenged by clients and colleagues and acknowledged the need for ongoing development. She said, "But you know Wendy, I have balls now. I can see that it is okay to say no. It's okay to ask for what I want. I am also going to be more discerning about the places I choose to work in the future. Almost losing my registration ... this has been a wake-up call for me."

When I asked Fiona for her permission to include her story in this paper, she said yes and added that she hoped her experiences would assist other professionals avoid boundary transgressions.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has described ways in which my personal psychodrama journey has enabled me to gain greater appreciation of childhood boundary violation and isolation, and the links to my current work as a professional boundary trainer. That greater clarity has been integral to my role in assisting health clinicians to identify their role responses to clients and colleagues. For many of these clinicians, the potential or actual boundary transgression is only ever a nanosecond away from the past. The educational work they are required to do as a result of transgression taps into their original social and cultural atoms, where there has been little adequate doubling. I am appreciating that part of my work is to create a learning experience in which clients are adequately doubled, and can then develop new and progressive roles as they traverse the worlds of their professional and personal selves.

I also reflect on a number of broader themes that this paper raises. The first one concerns the importance of managers appreciating the complex systems and wider culture in which they and their health professionals work. I propose that an understanding of sociometry could assist here. For example, where a team leader has a positive relationship with the health professional who has transgressed boundaries, they may be less likely to take a punitive approach. Secondly, regulatory bodies could develop the understanding that boundary transgressions potentially provide an educational opportunity for an individual practitioner, and indeed for a profession as a whole, and develop an approach that expands the capacity for growth and limits blame, shame and punishment. Thirdly, it is worth considering that where an individual



health professional has a good balanced life with fulfilling personal relationships, there will be less hunger for them to develop relationships with patients and thus run the risk of boundary transgressions. Fourthly, psychodrama has much to offer the world of professional boundaries. It promotes the integration of theory into the individual personality of the human being and thus enables a deeper thoughtfulness regarding the professional's role responses as they engage with patients and colleagues, as well as the maintenance of functional multiple relationships within complex systems.

## *Epilogue*

As I write this paper as an adult, I sit beside my eight year old self on the staircase. I realise that the gentle doubling I have received in psychodrama, from my peers and from my supervisor, has led to a living sense of forgiveness in myself. From this experience, I know that gentle doubling works best, especially when addressing the deep sense of shame and sometimes suicidal feelings that many who have transgressed professional boundaries experience. I now see that, almost without realising it, I have been embodying this approach with individual clients. In appreciating the deeply affirming effects of a gentle self-loving double for myself, I stay aware of the vital importance of such a double for my clients as they come to terms with their transgressions.

I turn to the eight year old Wendy beside me on the staircase. I hold out my hand to her and she takes it, gently. We sit together. I am content to be her companion, to do whatever she asks. I see her. I validate her. She turns to me. Her face is so soft, so pure. She is gorgeous. I have not noticed this gorgeous one before. How did I miss this? I smile at her. I am filled with enormous warmth and love for her. She holds me in her gaze. She says, *I am ready. I am ready to leave the staircase. It is time for me to take new steps.* I hold her gaze. I say, *I am ready. I am ready to leave the staircase. Time for me to take new steps.* We walk together. There is strength in our hands and there is a purposeful lightness in each step we take. We take a deep and contented breath together ...

**Footnote:** The three practitioners, whose names have been changed to protect their anonymity, gave permission for their stories to be included in this article. I thank them for their generosity in adding their support to this work.



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### Dr Wendy McIntosh, PhD.



I started my own training company - Davaar Consultancy in 2005. Having worked in public and mental health systems in Scotland and Australia since 1984, I experienced barriers to creativity and spontaneity that I could see were detrimental to health professionals and patients. I was determined that I would find a way to integrate my appreciation of the benefits of psychodrama into my work as an educator. Being my own boss has given me certain freedoms to have fun and be creative whilst introducing health professionals to psychodrama. This has been especially important in the work I do in professional boundary training.

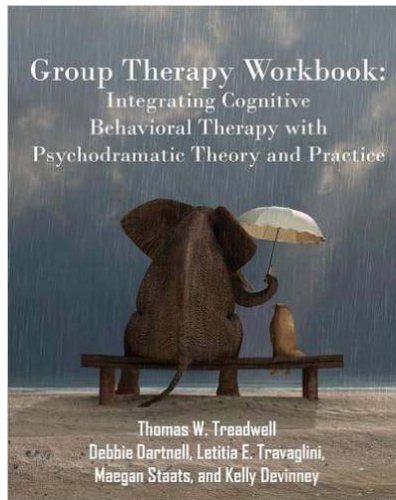
## Book Reviews

### *Group therapy workbook: Integrating cognitive behavioral therapy with psychodramatic theory and practice*

by

Thomas W. Treadwell, Debbie Dartnell, Letitia E. Travaglini,  
Maegan Staats, and Kelly Devinney

Outskirts Press, 2016



Reviewed by Jenny Wilson

I am delighted that Tom Treadwell and his colleagues have written this book. It is a first. It is the only book that I am aware of that integrates Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Psychodrama. I hope it will lead the way in generating more interest and more activity in this area as the combination of these two therapies has potential to be richly productive.

This is what the title says it is, a workbook, so there is understandably a focus on methods and techniques employed by each of the therapies. The theory of CBT is summarised with an even shorter coverage of

psychodrama theory. Rather than focus on theory, the authors have taken a practical approach and made suggestions about the use of various methods within a group format. This focus makes the book reasonably easy to read, but much of what is understood by a skilled CBT therapist or psychodramatist is left unsaid. Each of these therapies could claim to be an integrative therapy – able to adopt some techniques from the other. However, it is at the level of theory and philosophy where they differ significantly and where integration questions will arise.

In my own work integrating CBT and psychodrama, I'm aware of a number of dilemmas and contradictions. For example, traditional CBT focuses a great deal on *containing* emotion; theory and strategies are focused on specific goals related to managing, tolerating and reducing distressing symptoms in mental health conditions. Psychodrama by contrast often gravitates towards deepening experience across an extensive range of life experiences, and *emotional catharsis* is an important concept in psychodrama theory. When to contain, when to expand or maximise if we integrate the two? The CBT therapist and psychodramatist in me frequently disagree about this!

Classical psychodrama and traditional CBT also have quite different perspectives about when to expand on experiences from the client's *family of origin* - or even whether to do this at all. If one goes on a hunch (rather than a theory) you will find that you have in fact, gravitated to a preferred theory of your own. I would have loved to see this workbook (or a companion therapist manual) tackle these and other issues.

One of the richest elements of psychodrama is the group-work process and relationships between group members. Traditional CBT groups on the other hand are likely to give process a relatively small amount of attention, instead focusing a great deal on techniques. Psychodramatists trying out the suggested CBT approaches in this workbook for the first time are likely to experience significant tension (maybe dismay!) related to time spent on written CBT content (e.g., psycho-education; filling out forms related to thought records and symptom measurement; setting and reviewing homework). Personally I think that the most helpful gifts that psychodrama can bring to CBT are great action alternatives to the form filling and written tasks. However, a CBT therapist will struggle to direct the enactments suggested in this book unless they already have training and skills in group process.

The workbook assumes a level of therapist competence in conducting psychodrama enactments, and so is probably targeted at experienced

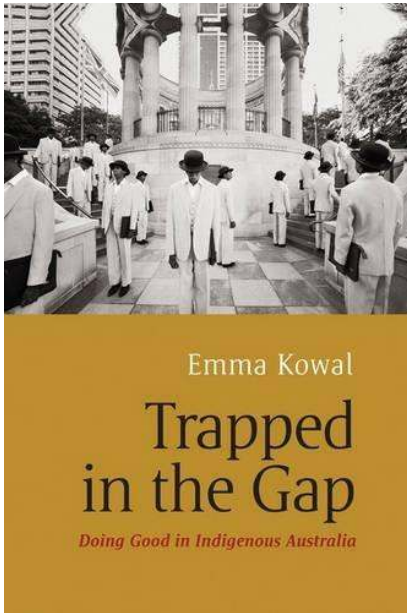
rather than new therapists. The detail in the enactments provide helpful examples of CBT and psychodrama strategies combined that a psychodramatist is likely to be able to adapt and make good use of. Those hoping to make use of the suggested therapeutic techniques will probably need to extend their reading and experience beyond this workbook. The reference section suggests books and papers that will be useful for the reader interested in doing so.

I think this book will be a useful addition to the psychodramatist's library. Psychodramatists are well placed to learn and use CBT techniques within their work, and may find it strategic to do so in today's funding climate. This book offers a sensible introduction to CBT theory and very smartly also includes an introduction to Schema Therapy (a more recent development that has much more overlap with psychodrama). Several ideas for sessions are outlined and there are good suggestions as to how they might be included in a group setting. A selection of useful participant handouts and information sheets are provided that will help the group leader prepare for such a group. The CBT therapist with an interest in group therapy is also likely to find this book interesting. It offers tantalising examples of the power of psychodrama in a group setting, and may prompt readers to find out more about the method.



*Jenny Wilson is a clinical psychologist and psychodramatist. She has an easy and familiar relationship with both Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and psychodrama, which took some time and wrestling to achieve. Jenny is currently enjoying a settled and creative period with a new focus on learning about, and making, art.*





*Trapped in the gap:  
Doing good in Indigenous  
Australia*

by Emma Kowal

Berghahn Books, 2015

ISBN: 978-1-78238-604-9

Reviewed by Jenny Hutt

This book is about non-Indigenous practitioners working in Indigenous Australia.

Emma Kowal draws from her own experiences working in a health service in the Northern Territory and from an interesting range of literature to portray practitioners experiencing what psychodramatists might describe as a 'conflicted warm-up'.

It's relevance to non-Indigenous professionals and non-Indigenous citizens lies in its attention to the baggage we can bring to intercultural relating. Kowal adds to the expanding Australian literature about what might be termed whitefella work, including Sarah Maddison's (2011) *Beyond white guilt: the real challenge for black-white relations in Australia*, Clare Land's (2015) *Decolonising solidarity: dilemmas and directions for supporters of Indigenous struggles*, and Mark Moran's (2016) *Serious whitefella stuff: when solutions become the problem in Indigenous affairs*. Kowal says her study was partly inspired by Gary Foley, Aboriginal Gumbainggir activist and academic, who said, 'Don't worry about us, you work on your own mob.'

Kowal locates her study in what she calls the 'contact zone' where colonisers and colonised meet; a place of radical cultural difference. She focuses on a distinct sub-group of the broader progressive Australian

community who she calls White anti-racists, a group to which she belongs. She distinguishes them not so much by their actions to counter racism, but as a group with a shared culture, discourse and identity. She examines and illustrates the dynamics of this group in three settings.

The first is a Northern Territory health clinic where a disillusioned health educator doubts the impact of her work in 'closing the gap'. Closing the gap is an Australian government policy to reduce disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, and employment outcomes. The second is a Darwin suburb where various sub-groups (including residents, city council and health workers) respond to the presence of displaced members of the Mangingrida community, known as 'long grassers' who live in the open and drink heavily. The third setting is at a series of conferences and meetings around the country where Welcome to Country<sup>1</sup> and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners are conducted.

I found this last chapter of great interest as a stand-alone piece of writing. In discussing the origins of these ceremonies, Kowal cites traditional rituals which involve visitors waiting for long periods on the border of country to be acknowledged. Some rituals are not so much to welcome visitors, but to protect them from harm from the unfamiliar spirits of the country. Other contemporary expressions of welcome to country are thought to have emerged in the 1980s and spread in the 1990s, encouraged by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. The welcome to country is believed by some to have been adapted from the Maori *powhiri*. An early expression of this occurred in 1976 when an Aboriginal theatre group received a request to be welcomed from visiting Maori and Cook Island dancers.

Kowal observes professionals in the three settings tying themselves up in knots. One is because of a fear of doing damage. While they hope to see Indigenous people lifted out of disadvantage to participate fully in Australian society, statistically equal to but culturally distinct from other Australians, they fear that by 'closing the gap' they will be involved in destroying Aboriginal culture.

Another fear is of imposing on Indigenous people and in so doing, being a modern day assimilationist or missionary. For this reason, there is great ambivalence in exercising agency as a non-Indigenous person.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Country' is the land of the traditional owners within an Aboriginal nation or language group.

This can mean remaining silent, underplaying their contribution, exaggerating the role of community members and reluctance to question anything an Indigenous person says. They may even 'valorise all things Indigenous and rebuke all things Western'. While these behaviours may reflect commitment to Indigenous self-determination, psychodramatists may also recognise them as restrictive solutions to the substantial focal conflicts<sup>1</sup> experienced by non-Indigenous professionals.

Kowal argues there is 'white stigma' at play. Whiteness is seen as a deeply discrediting stain, associated with exploitation, colonisation, imperialism and general dominance. And with it comes the felt need to undertake social 'performances' and 'speech acts' which makes non-Indigenous people recognisable as *good* white people: anti-racists. And of course at times, distinguishing themselves as *better* anti-racists than their colleagues.

The book is written in an academic style and took quite a commitment to read but it is fascinating. I particularly enjoyed that it highlighted a number of conflicted warm-ups and restrictive solutions to watch out for. It surveyed a wide range of literature (from the fields of development and whiteness studies) about the world-views of those working in the 'contact zone'. Yet, as it limited its scope to studying non-Indigenous people, it wasn't able to present a lively and complete picture of the context, and of the two-way intergroup role relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

However, I particularly appreciate that Kowal brings to light and makes 'discussable' several conflicts experienced by non-Indigenous practitioners working in Indigenous Australia. I think naming them is an intervention in itself. Her work is a good reference point for conversations which open out what ethical and effective partnerships between non-Indigenous practitioners and Indigenous clients and colleagues can be. Conversations which may interest professionals and citizens alike.

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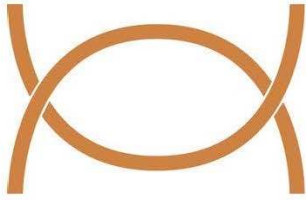
<sup>1</sup> A focal conflict is experienced in a group between disturbing motives (such as the desire to make a difference) and reactive fears (such as a fear of being oppressive and of perpetuating oppression). A restrictive solution to these conflicts (rather than an enabling solution) fails to adequately honour both the motivations and the fears. See Whitacker and Leiberma's (1964) *Psychotherapy through the group process*.





**Jenny Hutt** is a Sociodramatist, TEP and Director of Training at the Melbourne Campus of Psychodrama Australia. She is a coach, facilitator and learning and development practitioner with groups and organisations. Jenny specialises in workplace diversity, leadership development and has a keen interest in intercultural learning. She is an associate with an Aboriginal majority owned consulting company and is currently engaged in 'two ways' projects with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients and colleagues.

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## AANZPA Conference 2017 | Auckland

25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of January

Quality Hotel, Parnell, Auckland

J. L. Moreno envisioned psychodrama as a method that brought together the stage and the theatre with psychology, education, sociology, cultural anthropology, psychiatry and other branches of the social sciences. In AANZPA our practice of psychodrama bridges our different identities. Through this conference we aim to celebrate our diversity and share insights gained as a result of our application of the method.

