

Sociodrama with a marketing team

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In Australia, sociodrama is taught within overall psychodrama training. In this way trainees are well grounded in Moreno's fundamental methodology: sociometry, role theory, production techniques, the doctrine of spontaneity-creativity and groupwork. This has been the approach since Max and Lynette Clayton introduced psychodrama to Australia and New Zealand in 1975. Unlike countries where psychodrama is taught as an accredited form of psychotherapy, there is no major division between psychodrama and sociodrama in Australia. Rather it is the context and purpose that changes and this requires that the sociodrama director apply the methods in a different way. Sociodrama is largely treated as a specialisation that develops after the basic training years.

Sociodrama was developed further by Warren Parry during the 1980s through particular attention to managing the warm-up, especially the need for a parallel warm-up to the social and personal worlds of group members and matching the warm-up to the work focus of the group. This naturally led to an understanding that there were protagonist-centred and group-centred sociodramas and that, in either case, a strong link was needed to relate the meaning of the experience back to participants' own lives.

In the 1990s, Max Clayton introduced the idea of the 'Sociodramatic Question', to hold the focus of the group to its task, and also began to teach a sociodramatic interview for role, to explore and deepen the expression of world views held by sub-groups within a social system: "The world works best when .." (Hutt, 2001).

In the last twenty years, sociodrama in Australia and New Zealand has continued to develop, through various practitioners applying Moreno's methods in organisational and community contexts (McKimmie, 1985; Thomson, 1997; Willisroft, 1998; Guild, 1999; Hutt, 2001; Browne, 2005; Synnot, 2005). It is still evolving, as sociodramatists experiment around how to bring spontaneity into the social systems they work with. In comparison to the sociodramatic experiments of Moreno in Vienna (Moreno, 1946; Marineau, 1989) and more recently in South America (Greeb, 2008; Aguiar, 2001), there has been little emphasis in Australia and New Zealand on sociodrama as a form of community action, political expression or as a 'voice of the people'.

The practice of sociodrama largely depends on how the director understands the purpose of sociodrama and how it works. Moreno's high level description of sociodrama and its purpose is relatively simple: "The group approach ... of analysing and treating social problems" (1994, p.325). In general terms, sociodrama is concerned with social roles and our collective identity as a group (or sub-group) in society or in an organisation, and with making sense of the way the group operates. The purpose in sociodrama is to focus on social and organisational issues with a view to understanding our position and making changes. Like all Morenian action methods, it is a tool for social transformation.

However this is not particularly helpful in assisting the sociodrama director work out how to direct in practice. What matters is how the director thinks about sociodrama, what it is, how it creates

change, and what is required to create and deepen a unified warm-up to the issue at hand. In so doing, the director mobilises their leadership roles and shapes the group process to focus the group, hold it to its purpose and release its spontaneity in the service of achieving its goal.

A WORKING DEFINITION OF SOCIODRAMA

Here is my description of what sociodrama is:

Sociodrama is a learning method that creates deep understanding of the social systems and social forces that shape us individually and collectively.

Through sociodrama, we can experience and come to understand the nature of our social systems and their influence upon our personal and group roles and relationships. With this understanding, we can better address some of the collective issues that face us. This necessarily involves concretising the social systems inherent in the presenting situation and the social forces that shape behaviour at the critical moment in the scene.

A sociodramatist needs to think in terms of social systems. To do this means the director thinks systemically about a presenting situation and identifies the various parts of the system and the dynamics between those parts so that the group learns about what shapes its behaviour. Systemic thinking involves making descriptions about such things as the roles, relationships, rules, norms, behaviours, patterns and social forces operating in the social system.

A 'social system' is a term that loosely describes the field of complex inter-relationships around a presenting social issue. Systems can be as large or as small as the issue being described. There is no right way to describe a system as that always depends on your viewpoint and why you want to explore it. Naming something as a system allows us to see it in a different way, and look for organising principles, patterns of behaviour and points of leverage. It allows us to discuss complex issues in a way that can develop insight and understanding.

We can think of social systems as being subject to social forces that provoke or resist change. These forces operate on elements of the system, such as each person, and relationships between the elements. Similarly, in organisations and families, there are social forces that shape behaviour in groups, such as conventions around status, politeness or difference. Some of these are overt, "Nobody challenges the boss' ideas", and some are held unconsciously as assumptions about life, "conflict is to be avoided".

Depending on the issues a group or organisation faces and the purpose for its' meeting, we can examine the effect of relevant social forces on the group through sociodrama. By definition one person cannot easily change a social system or an organisation but collectively individuals can create structures and build relationships, in effect a sub-culture that will contain, mitigate or redirect these social forces. We can do little to influence external events but we can manage our responses differently and influence what aspects of our culture get conserved and what gets re-examined.

What does this mean for the sociodramatist?

Thinking systemically is not as straightforward as it sounds. In even the simplest meeting there is a lot going on. The complex reality of people is automatically there in every scene, even two people at a café drinking coffee. All the social systems, personal histories, upbringing, aspirations, the economic conditions, health, age, gender, the supply of coffee beans, the labour of the coffee

workers, transport systems, their relationship, assumptions about each other, family situations, status, nationalities and so on are present. It is not too much to say that the universe is there in every scene.

The sociodrama director works with this reality but trains his or her perception to notice the social systems at the scene, what social forces are operating and how they influence behaviour. In any given moment the social, the group and the personal world are all present. The director needs to keep aware of all three and hold the focus on those elements (such as patterns, data, forces and relationships) that relate to the purpose for which the group has met. The director's job is to work with the participants and bring out the value for them. The aim is for participants to see the dynamic forces operating in the presenting situation and understand their roles in it.

In a sociodrama, the director and participants can experience different positions in the system as-it-is and more deeply understand the social forces that shape and transform us. As always with Moreno, the purpose is to create change in perceptions that lead to action to break free of the cultural conserve.

How sociodrama creates change

This is a working description of how sociodrama creates change:

The transformative power of a sociodrama emerges when participants:

- *develop action-insight from their experience of exploring a relevant social system as-it-is, and*
- *generate sufficient spontaneity to intervene in that social system and reconfigure it (i.e. go beyond the cultural conserve).*

Part of the benefit of exploring a social system as-it-is and understanding the forces involved is that participants see those elements which they can do something about, where they can take action and those which are out of their control.

In most dilemmas or stuck situations, most group members don't realise that they are interacting with the world from a single and possibly fixed view. In setting out a scene, participants start to experience other points of view and this begins to broaden their perspective. As they develop insight through exploration, their energy gets released and they take action in the situation they face. I think of this as action-insight.

All transformation, in Moreno's terms, works on the basis of co-creating and being co-responsible for what occurs (Marineau, 1989). The sociodramatist works interactively, with a genuine spirit of enquiry – not as an expert there to tell the group or manager what the problem is and what they have to do. As a rule of thumb, one of the outcomes of sociodrama is that participants more effectively intervene in their social systems. Hence, the true test of this work is whether the spontaneity generated is sufficient to assist, for example, teachers to intervene appropriately in their own school.

Thinking systemically is an essential starting point for the director. However, conducting an effective sociodrama in a group requires an understanding of what is involved in warm-up.

WARM-UP IN SOCIODRAMA

The development of action-insight and the release of spontaneity into the social system occur as the director promotes the purpose of the group and works with the warm-up to co-create and be affected by the enactment. Within Morenian methodology, the concept of warm-up has a central place because it is such a fundamental element in the success of the method. Warm-up is the key to unlocking the doors of spontaneity so that participants experience themselves flowing with free choice rather than acting out of narrow roles in constrained situations.

Warm-up is best known as a theatrical term referring to what actors do to get ready for a performance or rehearsal. In developing his theories, Moreno drew on concepts from the traditional theatre (Marineau, 1989), expanding on the process of warm-up in the expression of spontaneity and warm-up to role.

One of the main tasks of the sociodrama director is to manage the warm-up so that it deepens and serves the purpose of the group. Three vital aspects of deepening warm-up are:

1. understanding warm-up as a process of becoming absorbed in a role,
2. working to maintain the group warm-up at the level where the work of the group is, and
3. sustaining a parallel warm-up to both the social and personal worlds of the group members.

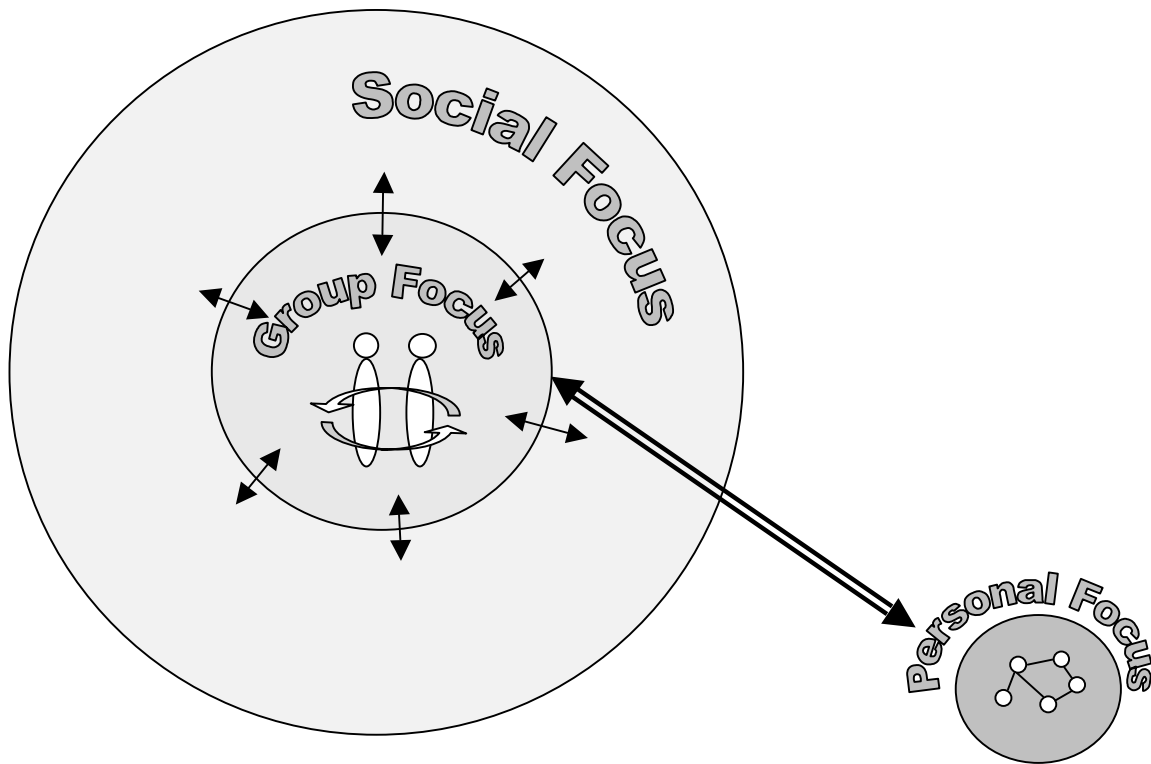
Absorbed in role

One useful way to think of warm-up is as a process of giving attention to someone or something and becoming absorbed in that state (this description is attributed by Warren Parry to Lynette Clayton). We warm up to what we give attention to and become absorbed in a role (thought, feeling and action) in relation to what we give attention to. Therefore the process of giving attention is the vehicle by which we get into role. The more we give attention to someone or something, the more we become absorbed in the role.

The degree of warm-up refers to the extent to which participants bring their personal selves into a role and become absorbed in the role. The more they do this, the more they warm-up to their own spontaneity and hence bring out the core issues in the various roles. This has a major impact on their experience, in how they make sense of (integrate) the drama, and on their learning outcomes.

However every role exists within a system and, when evoked, the role gets acted out. It must then be put to service in meeting the purpose of the group. The question for the director is, what is the focus that the group needs to sustain so that the work gets done.

THE LEVEL OF WORK FOCUS



Matching the degree of warm-up to the work focus

The second aspect of warm-up is that the director manages the degree of warm-up so it matches the work focus of the group (Parry, 1985). There are three broad levels of work focus.

1. Social Focus is concerned with the outer, external world of human society;
2. Group Focus is concerned with the dynamics in the group of participants who are present in the room;
3. Personal Focus is concerned with the internal personal world of an individual, with more intimate or deeper issues, often relating to their original social atom.

These levels co-exist all the time and intersect. For example, a dispute between a staff member and their boss exists at all three levels. It is, at the same time:

1. an industrial relations problem in the organisation (social);
2. a dynamic between two people (group);
3. a personal issue for one or the other (personal).

The sociodrama director holds to the purpose of the group and focuses on the level of work required to meet that purpose. The director then manages the warm-up so participants remain focused at the level required.

It is worth noting that it is human nature to seek greater intimacy, to get to the personal. Once a warm-up has deepened within a group, people do not easily return to a shallower warm-up. This is the reason why it is not easy to teach sociodrama to a psychodrama training group. The existing relationships and expectations of learning will consistently take the warm-up to the personal at the expense of the social. In contrast, when we work with social forces and social systems, there is an opposing tendency to go into the abstract as we make generalizations about complex systems. If not well managed, this takes the warm-up to a less personal level and reduces the depth of warm-up and hence the impact of learning. Therefore it is vital that the sociodrama director sustains a parallel warm-up to the personal.

Sustaining a parallel warm-up to the social and personal

From looking at how children learn and play, Moreno categorised roles as: somatic (e.g. eater, sleeper, breather); social (e.g. doctor, policeman, sports fan); and psychodramatic (which captures the unique way an individual enacts that role). However it would be a mistake to assume that sociodrama works only with social roles and psychodrama works only with psychodramatic roles. All three types of roles are present all the time.

Social and personal roles already co-exist and the director needs to sustain a parallel warm-up that is both personally and socially focused. A warm-up to the personal is important because effective learning occurs only when we are touched deeply at an individual level. Where there is a low degree of personal warm-up, there is not enough of the person's self in the role to make the enactment matter.

But if the warm-up to the personal dominates, we cannot be effectively engaged at a group level and the social focus may be lost. A warm-up to the social is thus equally important so that we can work on our collective issues. However, if the warm-up to the social dominates, then there is little possibility for the experience to touch participants at any depth: social roles in themselves will create a tendency to stay stereotyped and superficial. From such enactments we don't get much learning, just performance, somewhat trivial and hollow. When a parallel warm-up is maintained, exploring with a social focus is in no way less intense, less relevant or less important than exploring from a personal focus. In reality, the social and personal are inextricable.

Creating and maintaining a unified warm-up

At the same time as deepening the warm-up, the director pays attention to whether the group is unified in its warm-up to achieving its purpose. Warm-up is highly individual and often contradictory. To be effective the director needs to recognise and work with the here-and-now life of the group – whatever is attracting the attention of group members. The task of the director is to take account of the existing individual warm-ups in the group and refine them to a single focus, thus creating a group warm-up. The purpose of doing this is so that the spontaneity of group members can be applied to what the group is there to do. Managing the warm-up effectively is a critical part of Morenian methodology. Ultimately “everything depends on the warm-up” and hence planning the warm-up phase is important. This is particularly true of sociodrama (Parry, 1985).

The sociodramatic question

One effective way to crystallise a unified warm-up and to hold the group's attention on the presenting issue is to reframe that issue as a question for the group to explore. This approach, developed and taught by Max Clayton, is referred to as the “Sociodramatic Question”.

The issue facing the group is expressed in such a way that the group as a whole can warm-up to it as relevant both to them personally and as a suitable focus for the work of the group. In itself, a powerful sociodramatic question creates a unifying purpose in the group. It is a way of holding the purpose in front of the group. It helps the group to stay focused and to mobilize their resources. The framing of the purpose in this way is a critical step in creating a good sociodrama. The question can be set by the director (*director-directed*) and advertised as the purpose of the session or it can arise from the group (*group-centred*).

The following are examples of sociodramatic questions I have used in my work:

- How can we have healthy power relations in a detention centre?
- How can we intervene in schools to bring spontaneity into stuck situations?
- How can we work more effectively together to build reconciliation between black and white Australians?

The director uses the sociodramatic question as the basis for generating action and setting it in the here-and-now context of living. It is the basis for learning and producing insight. At the end of the drama the group returns to the sociodramatic question to see the logical 'whole' of their exploration and make sense of their individual and collective experience.

Once the group is unified around a single purpose, the move to action occurs. Often the starting point for exploring the sociodramatic question is a scene where the social dilemma is acutely felt. This may be the real life situation of one of the group members. If the presenting situation is only known to and set out by a single individual, the enactment is a *protagonist-centred sociodrama*. If the situation is more generally created by the participants then the enactment is a *group-centred sociodrama* (Parry, 1985).

The choice between protagonist- or group-centred enactment influences how the director makes the move into action and how the elements that make up the social system being investigated are set out. In a protagonist-centred sociodrama these elements are drawn from the individual protagonist. The protagonist is working on behalf of the group and group members often relate to the drama primarily via the protagonist. In a group-centred sociodrama these elements are drawn from group members. In that case the group itself is the protagonist and group members relate directly to the drama in creating and experiencing the social system as-it-is.

However, just because the director bases the exploration on a situation offered by a single individual, the enactment does not have to stay protagonist-centred. I have found that a parallel social and personal warm-up emerges easily when I select a presenting dilemma or scene from an individual group member, set it out with key elements (characters, relationships) and plot line, then explore the social system and social forces using the spontaneity of the group. For example, I might interview auxiliaries in their roles about what is driving their behaviour, rather than consult the protagonist. I might ask audience members what is missing in the scene and further concretise the social system and social forces being expressed until there is sufficient display to meet the purpose of the enactment.

The following example is drawn from my work in corporations. The situation is real but the identifying details have been changed.

MANAGING A NEW C.E.O. UNDER PRESSURE – A SOCIODRAMA

I have been invited to facilitate a training workshop for the nine senior staff of the Marketing Team at a fast-moving consumer goods company (think shampoos, soups, spreads, soft drinks etc). Participants include the marketing manager, three team leaders, three major supermarket account managers, and their finance and human resources managers. This workshop is part of an eight-month team development program.

The three-fold purpose of today's workshop is:

- to become more effective as a group,
- to take stock of progress to date and, in particular...
- to find a way to cut across ineffective behaviours.

In negotiating my brief with the manager, I secure his agreement to work with the real life situations facing the team. To collect stories of the real situations, I arrange to call each person beforehand and ask them for their take on what is happening in the team, particularly situations when the team is not as effective as they would like. I gather stories and ask them to give a title to each situation they have described. Many of these stories involve or are known to other group members. At this stage I realise that the main work focus is at the group level and that in any enactment there will be indications of both social forces and personal concerns.

At the beginning of the training workshop, I focus the group on our purpose together and conduct two warm-up activities:

1. group members select photographs to represent where the team was eight months ago and where it is now, expressing to the group what has changed. There is a positive feeling in the group – they like each other and realise there is work to be done;
2. a sociometric read out, on a scale of one to ten, on *“The extent to which this team has the (tough) conversations that matter.”* Group members then discuss in pairs what assists them and what gets in the way of having these conversations in the leadership group. I relate this to our agenda for the day.

We then move to the ‘Real Life Situations’ gathered through the individual phone calls. As none of the participants has been involved in action methods before, I outline what will happen and how I will run the session. This, functionally, is a *leader-led* warm-up to how we will learn together.

“In order to learn about our behaviour and what may be out of our awareness, we need to actually see what is happening in real situations. I spoke to each of you asking for those real situations. When we look at them, we will recreate the actual situation as best we can. We are not pretending because, as you will see, real thoughts and real feelings are involved. This is necessary to create effective learning about changing behaviour. ... The focus is to see what each of you might do differently. None of us can change anyone else. And you can only intervene based on what you perceive. We will be working with perceptions of what happened, essentially a subjective experience. Perceptions are important because we all act as though they are real. ... The last thing before we start is that we need an agreement of confidentiality for us to speak freely and get the most out of this session. Is that agreed?”

The group readily agrees. I then list the twelve story headings on the board and ask Mike, the manager, to select the first topic. He chooses ‘Managing the new CEO under pressure’. A number of

people smile – they know what is coming. He describes the situation briefly. I think of Mike as the protagonist for the sociodrama. The sociodramatic question I am holding is “How can we be more effective in handling our boss?”

I invite Mike onto the stage and ask him to set up the situation. Quickly we create a boardroom with seven chairs. Charles, the CEO (not a participant in this group session), is chairing a meeting with the Marketing Team about the results and the ongoing strategy for one of their main product lines.

Mike takes up the role of Charles and through interview we learn that Charles has been brought in from Europe to turn the company around. Their market share has not been good for the last two years, less than in other markets, and there is a lot of pressure to lift their game in Australia. He has an aggressive personality and is not restrained in his opinions. Group members laugh as they see Charles enacted.

Director: *What social forces are impacting on Charles?*

Soon we have the following forces concretised, expressed as subgroups placed around Charles.

Demanding Asia Pacific Boss: *Are you as good as you're supposed to be? You need to get it done now.*

Shareholder: *We want you to lift results. Profit is too low and so is the stock price.*

Executive Leadership team: *I hope you know what you're doing. It's not what Harry (predecessor) would have done.*

Critical staff, who watch:

You're strange...I don't understand you...what a weirdo...yes and that accent.

Marketing team as a unit: *Go on, show us how you're going to turn it all around.*

The social forces are enacted one by one. I direct Mike, who is playing the role of Charles, to show what happens to him in his body as he hears from each of these groups. I ask the group to observe closely.

Director: *What do you notice is the effect of all these social forces on Charles?*

Group members have a tendency to intellectualise and interpret rather than observe the ‘raw data’ of Charles’ behaviour. I interrupt this process.

Director: *What did you see that indicated that?*

Group members: *He gets tighter...his eyes narrow...he leans forward...he looks ready to stand up...he's tense...he grits his teeth.*

Director: *This tells you he is deeply affected by all these forces. They influence him a lot.*

Group members: *He's stressed...it matters a lot...he's on the line.*

We could explore further Charles’ personal responses to the social forces in the presenting situation. It is relevant but this is not the main purpose of the sociodrama. The more important dynamic is in the meeting room itself.

We then set out the other participants at the meeting. Mike selects the five people who were present at that meeting to be themselves and another person to play Charles. It is unusual that

almost all the people who were at the situation (except Charles) are present in the room. This saves a lot of time as we can get more quickly to the critical moment in the scene.

In role at the meeting, I interview each for their experience of what it's like being here with Charles.

Group members:

I hate being told how to conduct basic market research.

He's patronising, talks down to us.

Things might work that way in Europe but it doesn't work here. He's losing us.

He's doing his best. He's very stressed.

I'm worried about the team. We've worked hard to become more effective.

It is clear there are a lot of social forces present and a mix of social, group and personal concerns that influence their current understanding of the presenting situation. I bring the purpose of the session to mind – to cut through less effective behaviours – and make an assessment that the exploration needs to focus on what happens in the group as a system rather than on the social forces shaping each person's behaviour or on the larger social forces in the organisation. I ask for the critical moment where Mike realises something is not right and begin the action there. Mike says this is about 20 minutes into the meeting and takes up the role of CEO.

Charles (holding up a sample of the product, voice rising):

This is shit! How can we go out there and improve our figures if we produce a substandard product. I wouldn't buy this! (glares around the table) I wouldn't recommend it to my own mother! (tosses the product into the middle of the table)

The marketing team goes quiet. There is no verbal response. Instead a lot of tension, expressed through body language. Charles continues on relentlessly, outlining what ought to be happening, telling people how to do their jobs.

I pause the action. I ask each person at the meeting to show their physical response as Charles speaks. I then interview each person and ask for their core concern.

Mike looks down quietly, avoiding eye contact. He appears unruffled. His internal dialogue is: *I'm waiting for it to be over so we can get to what I want to talk about.*

Rowena looks across at Mike, willing him to stand up to Charles. Her internal dialogue is: *For Christ's sake, Mike. You're the manager, say something, anything.*

Tomasina looks at Charles with a half smile on her face. Her internal dialogue is: *I hate this. Please can we stop the conflict.*

Jackie looks embarrassed, fidgets with her pen: *Is he talking about me? What have I done?*

Trevor compresses his lips and sits there fuming. His internal dialogue is: *I did the market research. It's not great but it's nowhere near as bad as you say.*

I ask each auxiliary to make their physical response even more evident in slow motion. I request a re-enactment of the same critical moment when Charles speaks. This is the collective display of the responses of the marketing team. All participants are fully engaged. We have now moved to a group-centred sociodrama.

I pause the action and ask everyone to make notes for a minute about what they have observed. This is the phase of analysis. Group members offer the following observations.

We each go quiet.

No-one will speak up. What are we scared of?

I looked to you, Mike, to do something. I didn't want to take the heat or the leadership.

Nobody wants to intervene.

We're all acting as if we're powerless.

Each person drops out of relationship with Charles and loses their power.

Embedded in these comments are observations about the social forces impacting on the group.

Director: *What are the beliefs that keep the group silent?*

Group members: *Don't rock the boat...Don't stand up...Stay safe ...Avoid conflict.*

We create a subgroup of three auxiliaries advocating 'Don't-rock-the-boat'. I ask them to express their beliefs to those at the meeting. I coach the auxiliaries to enjoy themselves, to use their voices and really enter into it.

Subgroup: *He's the boss...He's in charge...He's the leader...He's responsible for turning the whole company round...This is the established order...You should follow it...You don't want to upset him further...We want you to stay safe...Say nothing...*

I interview the subgroup for role. I encourage them to enter into the spirit of the enactment, staying true to thoughts and feelings, but expand the role. This takes time as group members warm up.

Director: *You have firm opinions, where did you learn them?*

Subgroup member: *I was in the army – never step out of line was the rule...I want to keep my family safe...a job's important... Can't do without a job.*

Director: *Where did you learn that?*

Subgroup member: *From my dad – he went through the depression.*

Director: *What was that like?*

Subgroup member: *It was humiliating...Feeding your family is more important than principles you know.*

Director: *So you really know what you're talking about...Make them [Marketing Team] know how certain you are about how to handle their situation. All of you, carry on now.*

The enactment continues. I urge those at the meeting to experience their silence and passivity fully before they make a response from their feelings, their whole selves. I keep the diatribe going for as long as the 'Don't-rock-the-boat' subgroup can sustain its forcefulness. I look for someone who will readily express feelings rather than analysis:

Director: *Go ahead, Trevor, make your feelings known to them.*

Trevor (lifts his head and objects): *Yeah right...that's crap and you know it...I hate going one down and feeling, like, patronised.*

Group members (joining in): *That's just the safe way...it isn't going to get us anywhere...I want to stop this passive crap...We have to take some risks...*

The spontaneity in the group is rising. There is now a source of health in the system.

I coach the 'Don't-rock-the-boat' subgroup to sustain their role. The interaction continues, reaches a crescendo and I call a pause and link back to the sociodramatic question.

Director: *Notice that the energy has lifted, the feelings are strong and there is a readiness to act ... Is this enough to effectively manage a new CEO under pressure?*

Thomasina: *No. We still don't know what to do.*

Other group members nod.

Director: *Let's look again at the dynamics here. What are your thoughts?*

Group members: *We're silenced and go one down. Nobody does anything. No-one says anything.*

Director: *What is missing in the relationships?*

Group members: *Nobody relates to Charles. And he isn't really relating to us. Just to his concerns.*

Director: *Yes.*

There is a moment of silence as the truth of this sinks in.

Director: *So what is Charles' core concern?*

Group members: *He's really worried about the figures...He doesn't trust us...Actually I don't know what he means when he says 'this is shit'...I'm not really sure...*

Director: *These are mostly guesses, aren't they? We don't really know.*

Jackie: *Nobody asks him. We're all so bound up in our own worlds.*

Thomasina: *Any one of us could have asked him. It isn't just Mike's job.*

Mike: *That's true*

Trevor: *I can't believe how we all missed that.*

Mike: *Yes. In one way, it doesn't really matter what is pressuring him, we can't have a useful dialogue if we don't know what he is on about.*

Director: *In pairs, talk to one another about the sense you make of your own and of the group's behaviour.*

After a brief phase of sharing in the group, the sociodrama concludes with a focus on next steps.

Director: *It seems like you are coming to a conclusion among yourselves about managing your CEO. Let's frame this as a group agreement. How could you express it in a succinct way?*

The group quickly develops two statements:

1. identify the core concern and work from there;
2. it is always OK to check for core concern.

My final role for the day was as process coach in their business meeting. After lunch, the meeting begins and almost immediately there is a role test as Mike pursues an issue with Jackie on the basis that he understands what she is objecting to. I get him to check his conclusion about what her core concern is. Jackie corrects him and there is laughter. With a bit more practice this will become part of the new cultural conserve of the group.

CONCLUSION

The sociodrama emerges from a whole group warm-up that started prior to the workshop. The enactment is based on a situation selected by a single group member. It is initially protagonist-centred but subsequently evolves to a group-centred drama where the whole group is the protagonist. The enactment is guided by a sociodramatic question and a focus on a parallel warm-up to the personal and the social worlds at the group level. The social forces influencing Charles and the major social force blocking the marketing team's ability to respond creatively are concretised and explored. Learning in the group is deepened by an emphasis on observing raw data of what is happening, and making an analysis in the whole group of what it means for them. The tension between the subgroup 'Don't-rock-the-boat' and the Marketing Team is sustained until spontaneity is released. At this point there is action-insight as group members begin to see clearly what they could do differently. The sharing and the group agreement to work with the core concern sets the stage for them to coach each other to have the conversations that are most critical to their business outcomes.

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