

Sociodrama with Community Outreach Co-ordinators

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As a sociodramatist I am interested in what it is that guides a director in the moment by moment decision making when directing a drama. In this article I describe a sociodrama with community outreach co-ordinators working towards a multicultural Australia. These co-ordinators operate in a complex political environment with numerous pressures and stakeholders, some of whom also attend the workshop. The task of the director is shape the exploration and hold a clear purpose within the myriad possibilities that continually present themselves in the unfolding drama. The background and group warm up are presented first and then a description of how the sociodrama developed. This followed by a discussion of various choice points in the sociodrama and what it is that influenced my thinking and decisions as a director.

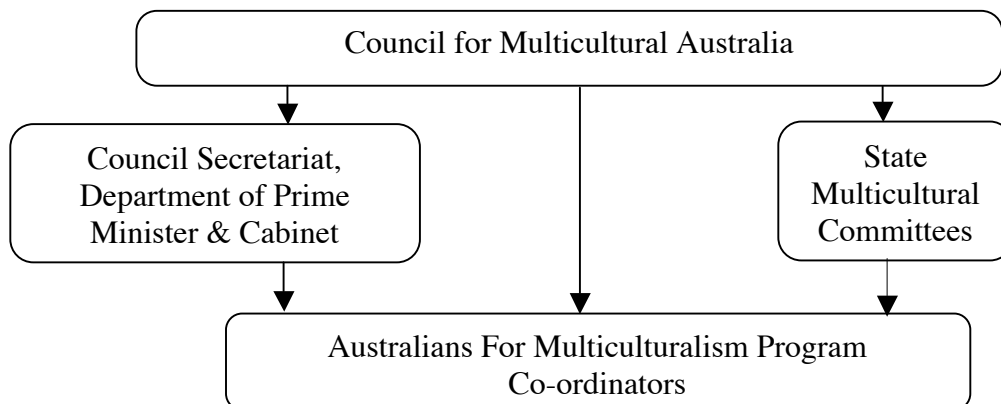
Background

There are 39 participants and one external facilitator in the room. The participants are made up of:

- 19 co-ordinators of the Australians For Multiculturalism (AFM) program. These co-ordinators (referred to as AFMs) are strategic change agents from each state and territory in Australia. Their role is to assist the Council for Multicultural Australia to create a national multicultural identity.
- 8 members, including the Chairperson, of the Council for Multicultural Australia (CMA), which is made up of over 20 prominent citizens involved in multicultural issues. This is a significant event as these 8 Council members are sitting down with the AFMs for the first time ever.
- 6 Chairpersons of the State Multicultural Committees (SMCs).
- 6 staff of the Council Secretariat, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet who administer the AFM program.

The main elements of the system surrounding the AFM program are set out in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1



The purpose of the Australians For Multiculturalism (AFM) workshop is to develop a stronger co-ordinated national focus for the last 2 years of work before ultimately handing over the reins to the State Multicultural Committees (SMCs) when Council's term ends.

The sociodrama takes place in the first session of the 3 day quarterly workshop. This is the third such workshop I have facilitated and this is the first time AFMs, Council Members and State Chairpersons have met together as a whole group. The State Chairpersons will go off to their separate meeting at morning tea. Council members will go to their Council meeting after lunch.

The room is large enough to have two working spaces; in one half of the room there are tables and chairs oriented to a projector screen, in the other half there is an action space surrounded by a large circle of cane armchairs.

The Warm Up

We are in the first morning of the workshop. Participants' warm up to the meeting is strong. Most AFMs have arrived the previous night and are pleased to see each other. Prior to the workshop I have spent time setting the workshop purpose with the Secretariat and asking the AFMs what they want to get out of our time together. I have circulated a table of all their responses by email. My planning for this session has taken particular account of the need to warm up to our purpose and to warm up to each other as individuals doing a job that is important to them and as professionals in community outreach.

In this phase I plan to set the scene and link participants. I decide to build the sociometry by warming them up to their wisdom as community workers, extending the network of relationships and getting them to value their work to date.

a) Opening

"Good morning and welcome to the quarterly AFM workshop. This is a different beginning because we have colleagues from the Council and State Committees with us for this first session. ... The overall aim of the workshop is to develop a stronger co-ordinated national focus for the last 2 years of work. Our work will be strongly influenced by Council's decisions on the community consultation strategy. You have all received Chairperson's letter, the consultation outline and the summary of AFM responses. So we have done what we can in preparation to these three days together. This workshop has been designed to take account of the key issues you want to raise and to continue to build us as a group of practitioners committed to improving our practice as community outreach workers. The first part of that is the joint session with Council Members and State Chairpersons.

b) Introductions as Community Outreach Workers

"Before we begin work it is important to re-establish ourselves as a working group. Lets do this over in the space over there. ... *Group moves to action space.*

"We need to welcome those who have joined us. Some are new to the Secretariat ... Welcome (*names 3 new faces*). Old campaigners take note we need to take care of each other in this process ... Some are Council members who we are very pleased to have here for the morning and some State Committee chairpersons who will shortly be going off to their own meetings.

"Join up with someone you do not know very well. In a moment you will introduce yourself to them and say something about what you do. But the key question is this: In all your work in this area of multicultural community work and public attitudes:

- ◆ What was the most helpful piece of advice or knowledge you received?
- ◆ If you re new, talk about what you've noticed so far in this work & an area where you might contribute.

Group members interact. A happy buzz fills the room. We hear from three people.

c) Networks:

“Now, lets look at the informal networks that keep us going.

Put your hand on the shoulder of the person (not someone from your own organisation)

- ◆ With whom you had the most contact so far. Lets have a look where the networks are. Is it the same person as last time I asked this question?
 - ◆ Someone you want more contact with. Tell them why? *Again a happy buzz arises*
- “Thank you. Please take a seat

d) Value of Work to Date

“Council and the AFM program are both nearing their end. At the end of next year what has been achieved will come under scrutiny. In a sense all our work will become publicly visible, held up for public examination. There is a natural concern at this phase in the life cycle of programs, where we wonder if we will make it and if we don't, whether all our work has been in vain. That is what I want to address now.

“At one level we could say that if the consultation document is not accepted (for whatever reason) that the Action Plans are less that we hoped for, then it doesn't mean that AFM program has failed, only that the country is not ready for multiculturalism. At another level, it would be a major disappointment. The danger here is that it is easy to lose sight of what has been achieved. At this stage what will happen is unknown and in this stage it is also easy to lose sight of what has been achieved.

“You stand in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela , and Ghandi. They also had their times of despair. Things didn't always go the way they wanted either. You stand on their shoulders, as you do on others shoulders in the movement before you. And others will stand on your shoulders even though you are not household names.

“Lets imagine that at over there is the end of his program in Dec next year” ... *points to the area of tables beyond the action space* ... “In the middle of the room it is the present, it's March this year” ... *standing on one side of the action space* ... “From here look back at the other end of the room” ... *points to far end of the action space* ... “where your started on this work whether it is ten or more years ago or even a few months ago. Go back to that point and walk the journey from where you started to the present. Walk slowly and by yourself, recalling what was achieved. Each person will have a different journey. Focus on what are you proud of in its own right, whether we achieve the outcomes according to schedule or not? ... *participants slowly trace their journeys*

“Form groups of three (mixing all the new people with the more experienced) and talk to each other about those things.

Thoughtful discussions ensue. We hear from 4 or so people including 2 Council members

Move to Action

“You will know that you could not have achieved what you have without each other. And that the nature of the task is overwhelmingly large with a lot of history and baggage. One of the dangers of this work is that we get so involved with our piece of the puzzle that we start losing sight of the whole jigsaw. This is as true of Council members as it is of the Secretariat as it is of the community outreach workers. In order for us to work well together we need a realistic picture of what the work is like, particularly for the strategic planners and big picture thinkers to see what the day to day pressures are in doing the community work ... Please take a seat in the circle.”

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

Director “In order to work well together we need a common understanding of what the day to day reality of the AFM work is like. ... This chair represents your typical AFM Co-ordinator. Around the chair we are going to set out the day to day pressures and challenges that they face.

“What is one of the people putting pressure on you AFMs? ... *long pause* ... *Looks at AFMs* ...

AFM1 “Well, one of the Local Multicultural Groups.

Director “What do they say to you?

AFM1 “Oh ... We need more support.

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

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

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

AFM2 “My State Committee Chairperson (*who is actually present in the room*). He’s been speaking to the press out of turn and I’ve copped it from the Department to keep him in line and we’re on the phone. He’s yelling at me for not keeping him informed.

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

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

Director “Is that how it is?

AFM2 “Absolutely

SMC1 “Yep. I bore it up her ...

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

AFM3 “Well there’s the death threats

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

AFM3 (as Threatening Phonecaller) *menacingly* “Listen here you bitch, if you keep on what you’re doing I’m gonna get you. I know where you live. You got a nice dog ... pity if something happens to him. Then you’ll be next”

- Director [Choice Point 4] You pick someone to make the threat and sit in this chair (at the centre)... *selects auxiliary ...* Now lets have a couple more people to represent the AFMs here in the middle. ... *two other AFMs sit in middle ...* What happens to you when you hear this? Show us with your body as you listen. You other two follow her lead. ... OK phonecaller you begin. ... *Auxiliary takes up role*
- AFM3 *slumps, hands over face* "Oh shit ... I feel sick. I can't move ... *Others mirror*
- Director "How long do you stay like that?"
- AFM3 "About 5 minutes then I call someone else. I'm bugged if I let it stop me doing what I believe in ... but it takes weeks to get over it ... I'm still shaky ...
- Director "So that's a big ongoing pressure ... In a minute we'll have all these pressures re-enacted. First we'll keep setting out all the significant pressures. What else is there?"
- AFM4 "Well, the Department always wanting reports on what we're doing. I'm too busy working in the community to give them the details they want.
- Director "You get up now and place yourself. Is this on the phone again? ... Yes
- AFM4 (as Department) "You haven't submitted the report on your work with local groups. It's 3 weeks overdue. Council meeting is next week. We can't report on progress unless we get it from you. What's going on? When will you have it done? Will you hold to it? This is serious. It is part of your contract. We can't keep going like this.
- Director "OK hold your position there ... *to whole group ...* Now we're getting a picture of the day to day pressures on working in the community ... [Choice Point 5] Let's hear from each of the pressures in order and then you AFMs in the middle speak out what effect it has on you? *Auxiliaries enact the demands in sequence*
- Typical AFMs in Centre "Hang on, we're doing the best we can. ...
- "What do you want – blood? ...
- "That's not my job, you have to follow the guidelines here. I've already told you that. ... *slams down phone ...* "I've had it with him. ...
- "We can't be all things to all people ...
- "They just don't realize what we have to put up with. ...
- "I'm glad I'm not doing this job on my own.
- Director [Choice Point 6] "This is a snapshot of what it is like as an AFM. Let's have everyone return to their seats. Thank you. ... Turn to the person next to you and have a conversation about what you are aware of now that you weren't before? ... *after 2 minutes ...* Lets hear a few comments.
- Participants "Hadn't realized what it was like.
- "Sorry to hear about those people threatening you.
- "That's terrible. Are you OK?"
- "Gee there's a lot there
- "It's very stressful. Don't know how you manage.
- Director "Thank you. The next step is that with a better understanding of the reality of day to day life of the community outreach we move into the key activity of looking at what we want and what we actually get from each other in this wider team. First we'll have morning tea for 20 min. And thank you very much to the SMC chairpersons for being part of our work here this morning. We will all be in touch with you.
- After morning tea we regather in the action space*
- Director [Choice Point 7] "You are the three most significant groups that influence how the Council achieves its goals (*AFMs, Council members, Secretariat*). How well you work together and the kinds of messages that are sent and received about what you each want

are easily distorted. So in order to improve effective working relationships we're going to focus on what you three groups give, get and want from each other. Please get together with your colleagues as Council members, Secretariat staff and as AFM Co-ordinators. Make a list for each of the other two groups under the headings 'What We Give', 'What We Get' and 'What We Want'. You have 30 minutes.

The three groups assembled in separate corners of the room and worked willingly on this task. The Council and the AFM group presented to each other first. No discussion was permitted until both groups had presented "What We Want". Many items on the lists were reasonably predictable and participants used the opportunity to bring out aspects of the tension in their formal Council-AFM relationships. As director I made minimal interventions at this phase. The list of AFMs' 'What We Get' included:

- "Some Council members ringing us continually on trivial matters.
- "Some Council members to expecting us to act as their personal staff, asking us to do non-essential and unstrategic community work.

This following exchange occurred.

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

CMA Member 1 "There's too much detail I just need to know what's important. Besides it's important that we keep in touch with you.

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

CMA Member 1 "But if I don't stay in touch with you then I don't get ideas about what to do ... and ... I won't know what to think. [Choice Point 8]

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

At this point there was a tangible feeling in the room that some Council members had finally recognised that they really needed the Community Co-ordinators to help them lead, rather than just do as Council members directed. This was a significant shift in role relations.

Each group completed the task, summarizing points to work on and began making preliminary agreements that made their work easier. The session subsequently closed and Council members participation in the AFM workshop ended. After a joint lunch Council members went on to their separate meeting. Subsequent workshop evaluation showed that AFM co-ordinators highly valued this session with Council members.

Discussion of Choice Points

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

A lot has gone on prior to this moment. I have been working towards this phase from the beginning of the workshop and I am conscious of many things. Among them are the feel of the group and its purposefulness, the level of interest and, in myself, the simple pleasure of creating an intrigue about what will happen next. I am holding two questions that I have already begun to answer. These are:

- What is the purpose of the sociodrama?
- How will I manage the warm up for the sociodrama to be successful?

The Purpose of the Sociodrama

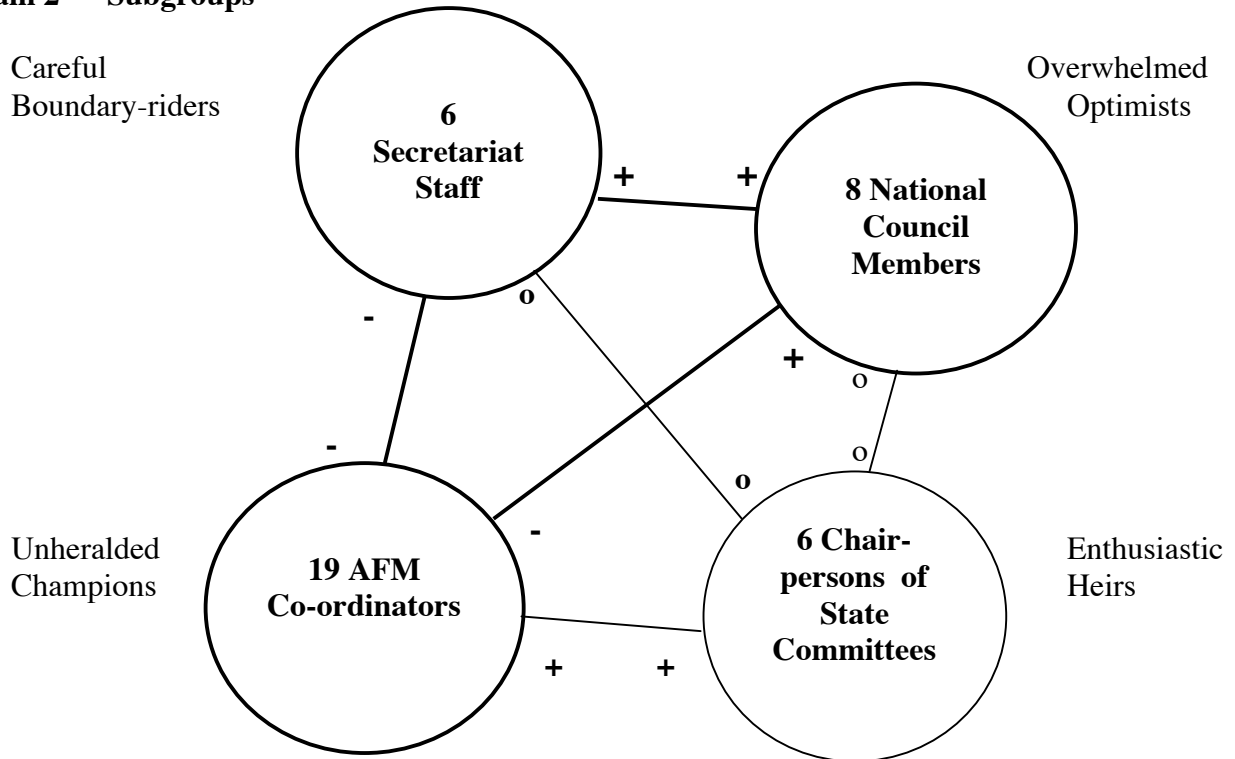
The sociodrama will only work if it is held within the purpose for gathering. As facilitator I am holding very clearly the purpose of the workshop. I have surveyed all AFM co-ordinators by email beforehand about outstanding issues and discussed the brief with the senior program manager at the Secretariat. As mentioned above, the aim of the workshop is to develop a stronger co-ordinated national focus for the last 2 years of work. In this particular workshop the objective is to work out the best way to put into action Council’s decision on the community consultation strategy. In order to do that I have to take account of the relationships and subgroups involved. I have been thinking about two related questions:

- Are the relationships between the subgroups adequate to the task?
- What roles are needed in their relationship to be more effective?

Analysis of Subgroup Relations

From my previous work with these groups and from discussions in the lead up to this workshop I have formed an analysis of the major subgroups and their relationships, see Diagram 2. In actuality the AFM Co-ordinators have a more complex relationship with the Secretariat and Council Members than simply ‘positive, negative or neutral’. AFM work is difficult and highly political. While they are highly committed to the goals of the program, and deeply respect most Council members as individuals, they have a cynical view of the Secretariat as a bureaucracy and of Council as an effective champion of the cause. Secretariat staff see their roles as having to keep AFMs in line. Council members are positive to both the Secretariat and AFMs because they essentially carry the hopes of the Council in achieving their objectives. The State Chairpersons are a relatively new part of the system and have been largely established through the efforts of their local AFM.

Diagram 2 Subgroups



In terms of the question, 'Are the relationships adequate to the task?' I do not think so. At the very least they could be improved. The AFMs as a group feel largely unseen in terms of both what is expected of them and the reality of the day-to-day pressures of doing their work. In the daunting task of changing community attitudes both Council members and Secretariat staff tend to take them for granted. My assessment is that AFM Co-ordinators do not feel sufficiently valued for what they do, particularly by Council members. However this is not directly mentionable in public because of the respectful nature of their relationships with Council members. I know that conflict is likely to be minimized because community outreach workers are highly skilled in influencing and negotiation. After all internal conflict usually means the death of any community outreach work.

My instinct is that the main role cluster under-expressed by Council members is clearly valuing the contributions of others. AFM Co-ordinators want Council members to understand the personal costs that the work really involves and they want to see what value Council members actually put on them. If the Secretariat become aware of this then there will be more trust. I hold my focus on the AFM – Council members as the key relationship needing to be developed. Relations with Secretariat are sometimes an issue but both AFMs and staff do meet regularly at these workshops. It is Council members who have been the missing element. When I have worked this out I check my analysis in the group. It is now quite obvious. There is no more time to think it all through. It is time to trust my judgement.

Because of the avoidance of personal conflict with Council members, some safe way of bringing out major concerns in public is needed. The role of 'Straight Talker' will emerge when there is sufficient structure to maintain professional distance even though the concerns are also intensely personal. Therefore my group interventions must focus on social roles and subgroups and as a consequence any enactment will be sociodramatic in nature, as this will build sufficient professional distance to allow people to be themselves in a group negotiation. I take the purpose of the sociodrama as being to:

- deepen understanding of each other's world. I am particularly interested in the development within the group of the role of Clear Valuer of Others Contributions, This awareness would then be used
- build capacity to negotiate better working relations.

The form of the sociodrama I imagined had two scenes:

- (a) an enactment of the day to day pressures in the life of an AFM co-ordinator. This would set out the elements in a system that has an overall impact on AFMs. This would be a group-centred sociodrama built around the life experience of group members.
- (b) a structured negotiation involving what we give, get and want from other subgroups. Here participants work in their subgroups, get to know what is important to them and how they relate to other subgroups. The identity of those subgroups and their relationships are refined. It is also real life and the integration of any understandings from the experience will be channeled into group agreements or action plans on how they will work together,

As in any sociodrama this required a parallel warm up in participants' social and personal roles. This will be discussed in subsequent choice points for the director.

After the sociometric exercises in the group I see that participants have warmed up to the purpose, to themselves, to each other, to display and to myself as leader. The placing of a chair in an empty space is a natural flow on from the previous work in the group. The visual stimulus of the chair and what it symbolizes focus holds the group's attention. There is a sense of expectation that something relevant

will occur and that it will be drawn from the group itself. All the dramatic skills of the director are present.

The chair anchors a tableau using distance and size and enactment to set out the system of pressures upon AFM Co-ordinators. It is the totality of this system that I am after. I want Council members and others to see the world through AFM eyes. The nature of government programs is that Council and the view of AFM Program administrators are always in the foreground so I feel I am redressing the balance. Once this occurs the possibility of a more effective working relationship can emerge.

Choice Point 2 Local Multicultural Group Spokesperson ... “We’re having trouble with the local council”

With coaching, the role is well enacted. The reality of local group life fills the stage. Group members are warming up to display their situations. This is a group-centred sociodrama. No one person owns the story. The simple act of enacting the role of the Local Multicultural Group spokesperson demanding attention sets up reactions in the rest of the audience. They each imagine what it would be like on the receiving end. They are warming up.

I choose not to role reverse as this would create a warm up to the individual role and role responses. Instead I continue to expand the system so that we become aware of what is pressuring AFMs rather than AFM responses. A focus on how the individuals respond will provoke solution finding in the relationship issue and as well as narrow the enactment to a single version of such relationships. I am more interested in warming up the group to the truth of what is out there. This is more in line with developing the role of ‘Clear Valuer’ of what it means to be an AFM. Here I am more focused on group relations.

Choice Point 3 State Committee Chairperson “I bore it up her”

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

- a. ask the AFM to come to the middle chair and respond to the chairperson thus capturing more of the conflict
- b. ask the AFM to take up the role of the SMC chairperson and have the SMC chairperson sit in the empty chair – get a role reversal
- c. bring out the elements (media, bureaucrats in Canberra) in relation to that SMC chairperson
- d. move on to the next pressure on AFMs

All of these things could have worked depending on how they are linked by the director to the purpose of the enactment.

Do I follow the lead and have their argument more fully expressed? Is there a value in bringing out more of their role relationship? In a psychodrama I would be particularly interested in this dynamic. In the sociodrama I am more interested in the range of elements that make up the system of the different

pressures in AFM working life. The audience would certainly enjoy a depiction of such a conflict but I notice a hesitation in me. As a director I have been trained to notice my inner cues and to use them to assist decision making in the moment. Producing this conflict would be a bit sensationalist even voyeuristic and I cannot sense an immediate link to our purpose. It is my purpose that holds ‘true north’ for me. My purpose is mainly on bringing out more of participants’ pictures and the full range of AFM pressures. The action is proceeding well and participants are continuing to warm up. I decide to keep expanding the system.

Choice Point 4 The Death Threat “pity if something happens to him. Then you’ll be next”

At this point I direct the AFM to show what happened to her on hearing the death threat. This was instinctive and contrasts with my decision at the previous choice point. The matter-of-fact telling of this shocking event has created a wave of concern in the group and in myself. This event is clearly more important in the life of the group and I go with the flow. To go against this would appear callous. There is no reason to deny my feeling for her. Directing a sociodrama I still need all my responses and connection to others. However, to reduce the isolation of protagonist in re-experiencing the moment of the death threat I get two other participants to also be the typical AFM at the centre of this system. This intervention removes the tendency to over-focus on a single person’s story and generalises the experience to the AFMS as a group. In directing a sociodrama I hold more emphasis on getting to know the nature of sub-group identity and the role relationships between subgroups than on individual role relationships. This is a group-centred sociodrama rather than a protagonist-centred sociodrama even though for a moment we are enacting a vignette around a single person’s story.

The death threat is replayed and the protagonist slumps, hands over face “Oh shit ... I feel sick. I can’t move”. The reaction to the threat is mirrored and amplified by the other auxiliaries playing the AFM at the centre of the system. The group is transfixed. The group has warmed up to both the personal and social aspects of the role: the personal nature of being vulnerable to a death threat and that this is part of the social role of being a community worker. Keeping aware of both the social and the personal warm up has been an important understanding in my development as a sociodramatist.

A sociodrama does not mean that we only enact social roles. To do this is a mistake. Staying at the level of social roles only creates a tendency to stay stereotyped and superficial. From such enactments we don’t get much learning, we just get performance. Unless there is a warm up to the personal alongside or within the social role then there is little possibility for the experience to touch participants at any depth.

Social and personal roles always co-exist and the way we name the role-in-the-moment reflects what we as a director are paying attention to. At this choice point in the sociodrama I notice that the simultaneous warm up to the personal and the social has deepened considerably. This is critically important in a sociodrama because without the parallel warm up to the personal there is insufficient depth of feeling to link awareness to drive change.

I next interview the protagonist for role as an AFM receiving a death threat. I could have directed her to reverse roles with the person threatening her with death but this is not our purpose as a group. protagonist is already strongly displaying the feeling aspect of her role. It is enough that she makes this visible. I have no contract to enter her inner world. My factual question lifts the thinking component of the role and she reasserts her determination to act without fear. There is no sense of ‘poor me’ in the

portrayal nor of a rush away from feeling. I sense that she merely wants to show the everyday ordinariness of living with such a thing. I decide to continue expanding the system.

Choice Point 5 “Let’s hear from each of the pressures in order

A range of pressures is now on stage. The warm up in the group to what is displayed is strong. I could have kept expanding the system but I am curious to see how the auxiliaries as a group of typical AFMs will react to the totality of the system of pressures. Rather than explore the nature of each pressure and the specific set of role relationships involved I am interested in the system as a whole. I want participants to warm up to the role of systems thinker, to see an expanded picture of what the reality of AFM work is. It is my belief that provoking systems thinking is important because we are so busy in our own corner of the overall system. Seeing an expanded picture warms us up to patterns in relationships, to thinking about other points of view, even role reversing. This is very likely to be helpful in creating progressive negotiations.

Choice Point 6 “This is a snapshot of what it is like as an AFM

We have had a warm up, an enactment of the system as a whole and now we need to develop the system and subgroup relationships further or have a sharing. I end the sociodrama here. On reflection I am influenced by a range of factors. The drama is very contained at this point; I am somewhat anxious about unleashing the complexity in the system and then having to pull it together; and it is nearly morning tea and SMC chairpersons have to leave. I have reached my immediate goal which is to warm the group up to the role of seeing clearly what AFMs go through so they build better inter-group relations.

We have some sharing and then I frame the next step so that participants can see the link we are making to the next piece of work.

Choice Point 7 “You are the three most significant groups ...

I think of this as an extended integration phase of the sociodrama. This is a role test of their subgroup relationship. I am intervening in the group to build their awareness of their subgroup identity. They have just had morning tea and been relating to each other as individuals. I want to warm them up to the role relationships between subgroups and to the whole system. I give each subgroup a task that involves them in defining their common identity in relation to the other two. This is where the role of systems thinker is picked up from the previous scene.

It is also the first time that Council members have clarified what they give, get or want from AFM Co-ordinators and similarly the first time for the Co-ordinators to think together as a group about what they give, get and want from Council members. By contrast secretariat staff have been working at this throughout the life of the program even though most communication has been on a one to one and on a state by state basis. This is the first time that the overview of their relationships has been on display.

Following the deepening of the understanding of pressures in the daily work of AFMs the possibility for progress in improving the working relationship between CMA members and AFS and between AFMs and the secretariat is enhanced. Subgroup negotiation is real and substantial work and with a positive warm up will develop the relations between the subgroups. I spend time framing why this is important before moving into the substantive task.

Choice Point 8 “I won’t know what to think.

The negotiations are relatively detailed and this one exchange stands out as highly significant. To me this was a culmination of the mornings work. When the Council member said “*and ... I won't know what to think.*” the AFMs clearly see what value they have to Council members. There is honesty in the exchange. In this moment they experience Council members developing the new role of ‘*Clear Valuer of AFM Contribution*’. They feel more seen for the work they do. They experience the new complementary role of *Insightful Guide to Council Leadership*. The pragmatic and constructive mood of the negotiations continues.

I feel that the substantial task of the sociodrama is complete. The key role for improving subgroup relations has been demonstrated. All that remains is to complete the other discussions between subgroups and to record the agreements.

Conclusion

Sociodrama, like other Morenian methods, follows the sequence of warm up, enactment, analysis and integration (or sharing). The warm up and enactment clearly follow the purpose. There were many points at which I could have directed a psychodrama. The group would probably have gone along with it. But it was not aligned with what I thought of as our purpose together. The main influences on my directing derive from my analysis of subgroups and their role relations and in defining and holding the purpose of the sociodrama. On reflection it would have been possible to involve the whole group in an initial assessment of their role relationships rather than simply do it myself. This would almost certainly have taken longer than the time available.

The group did take part in the analysis and act on subgroup relations in the ‘here and now’ when working out and negotiating in subgroups their ‘give get and want’ from each other.

In this case the integration occurred in the negotiated agreements they publicly made with each other as a result of sharing their perceptions. The implications for each subgroup and their future actions were held in the agreements. Likewise their learning was held in the ongoing relationships between the individuals and subgroups. In sociodrama I have found that it helps if the integration is very pragmatic because each person in the group draws different learnings out of the experience and will apply it in a different way.

At the end of the morning I did not ask for a sharing of what the process had been like for them or even what they were now aware of that they weren't aware of before morning tea. I could have and it would probably have reinforced the valuing of the process. My instinct was that they had poured their effort into their negotiations and it was enough to let the agreements stand.

Article submitted to ANZPA Journal No 17, Dec 2008.