Social System Case Study

in preparation for certification as a
Sociodramatist
by AANZPA

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Requirement of AANZPA Examination Standards for a Social System Case Study.

"A description of the roles operative in a social system you have investigated, using diagrams, discussion of what changes are called for in roles and what interventions you would make, together with a rationale for the interventions".

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1.0   Social Therapeutic Case Study

This case study is of a group workshop conducted at an AANZPA Conference when the theme was *Status Anxiety Sociodrama*.

The group began with me describing how I wanted the semi-circle of chairs to be arranged and where I wanted the group participants to sit in group and with me describing what would be the extent of the stage and where the whiteboard would be located. It was a surprise to me and the group participants that we had been ushered to a large school gymnasium type building when we were expecting to go to a room the size of a school classroom. Basketball lines were marked on the floor and I decided we would use one end of the court and the group would face a blank brown brick wall so they would not be distracted by the view of open windows or large open space. I wanted them to sustain focus on the stage as we worked.

I was keen to start the director-directed warmup exercise I had devised as soon as possible so the warmup in the group participants, to 'status anxiety sociodrama', remained strong and was not mitigated during the process of setting up the 'theatre'. I did this by saying it was good we had so much space for a good sized stage and we would, for some of the time, all be on the stage and need all the stage area. So everyone was ready from the get-go I instructed everyone to take up a position on the stage and to remain standing and await further instruction.

I was aware that I myself was ready and keen to make an immediate start of directing and producing and was aware each participant and the group as a whole was aware of my keen-ness and enthusiasm for the topic and the work. I also realised that I myself was accepting of everybody and everyone was aware of my acceptance of them as participants capable of strong group participation and overt and explicit auxiliary work.

The clarity of purpose and effort in intentionally designing the workshop had been clearly communicated both in the conference program and my presentation of the workshop to the conference. I carried a prompt sheet in my left hand and explained we would be doing a number of exercises and the prompt sheet would assist me to know where we were up to in executing the series of vignettes. I would not get lost in a vague process.

I instructed the participants to form 2 groups on the stage. One group (right of stage) was for people each willing to receive a large screened 3D-TV and the other group (left of stage) was for people willing to receive the latest I-Pad with smaller screen.

As they formed the sub-groups, group members rapidly made connection between the screens as status symbols of contemporary culture and the anxiety in choosing status laden cultural artefacts. Several expressed anxiety at having to make a binary choice or having to make this particular choice but none doubted the relevance of the exercise. After a moment or two all participants were able to make a choice.

The strong warmup to social status anxiety had at that point been made stronger and I noticed one participant in particular (who I knew was into video games) produce a huge smile as he chose the very large screen option. We exchanged an acknowledging gesture (expression) as affirming the relevance and value of concretising these consumer items as a start to sociodrama about 'status anxiety'. The workshop was off to a playful and relevant start with all participants accepting that a very intentional and prospectively good learning environment had been created.
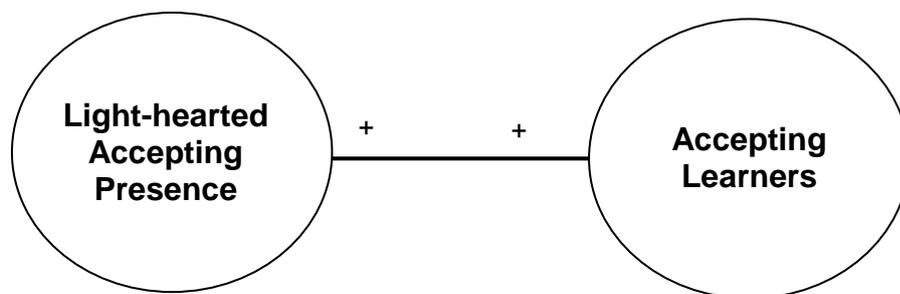
The major role I warmed up to was social systems truth seeker. I wanted myself to relate to real choices I was making as I was currently living my social system and I wanted *real* acting from participants making choice in living their social system in a real way.

Through staging and directing enactments of real social systems choice I warmed up becoming a *life giving being*. I wanted the participants to experience their day to day consumer choice sociodrama as life giving experiences and to experience me as enabling them in enacting life giving choosing.

I directed the participants of each sub-group to choose a group protagonist and a producer and then I directed the producer to get the protagonist to sculpt themselves and naively interview the sculpture as to the values they had in choosing the big or small screened item.

As social systems truth seeker I became a spontaneous coach who was coaching participants to become spontaneous protagonists and producers of themselves as actors involved in their social system. The participants willingly took up the roles of naïve protagonists and naïve interviewers and producers of social systems.

I loved the freedom the production of each of the vignettes produced. Different protagonists had different motivations and values in choosing the product. Each was able to imagine both becoming engrossed in their own personal world while relating to their screen and connecting to a social system wider than the screen itself and themselves as screen users. Either through watching movies or playing computer games or emailing videos of themselves and their surrounds to others in distant locations. I became a freedom loving teacher of how we each are both at the same time 'in over our heads' and embedded in our culture and free agents in making choice as to how we relate to the culture.

Next I used the whiteboard to highlight the specific value of sociodrama in social learning practice and then got participants to sculpt either or both a social media stereotype they identified with or what is at the same time a passion and of high social status for them. Participants shared, first in pairs and then to group, high profile social stereotype objects they were drawn to and how they owned being highly regarded and socially visible. One protagonist was supportively chosen by the group and she enacted being an active member of her fitness gym. Group members were enthusiastic auxiliaries in the drama and at the completion of the vignette shared how they are affected in similar circumstance. At that point all group members freely and meaningfully identified with the struggle of making meaning when participating in their social system.
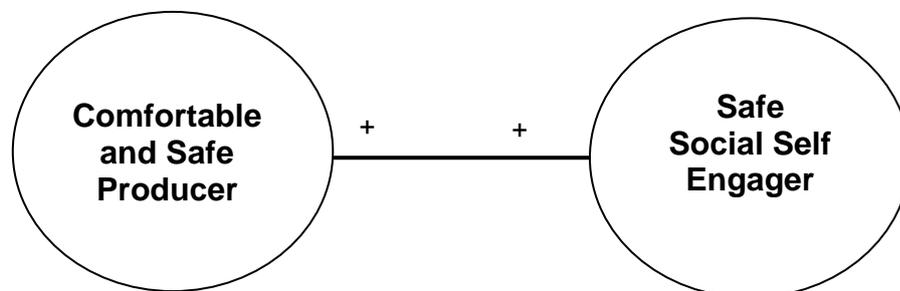

I felt proud I had achieved making a safe and social learning culture about social learning. All group members were re-calibrating (in general terms) what roles and how large a social role they were to play in the world. They were measuring themselves against fantasies of grandiosity and measurements of being impotent and exploring how to pioneer investigating and developing appropriately engaging their social system. They were researching how to be more requisite in the world and the roles they needed to bring to the fore and expand in order to become simultaneously self-authoring and sociable in their social system.

The climactic phase to the learning was when group members got to sculpt themselves as persons who love using the sociodrama method. The stage was populated with sculptors and sculptures of involved social

system explorers and spontaneous social innovators and actors realistically re-sizing themselves to match their 'size' of person (resources) to size of social role (challenge). In Vygotsky's terms, they were 'creating their zone of proximal development'.

At that point I felt the group had become sufficiently doubled by myself. I had doubled the group for sufficient time for them to accept me as an adequate double for them as they enacted being reflexive sociodramatists.
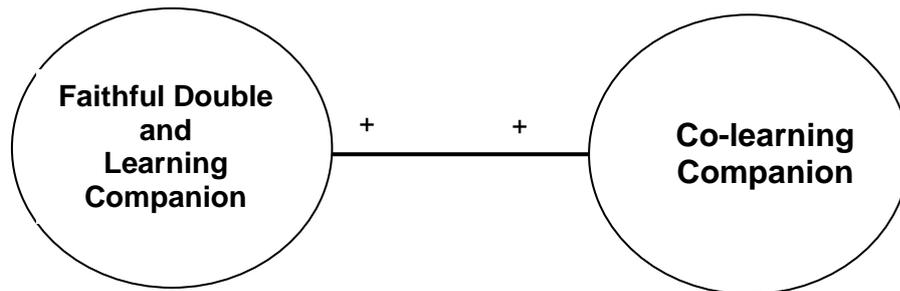

They were open in the group to discussing instances when; they did not know if they measured up socially, when they were too much \ too big for the situation, when they were too little \ too small for the situation and when they themselves were deciding or some social authority or other was deciding what was their requisite status.

As a means of completing and closing workshop activity I instructed participants to form a seated circle and to engage in sentence completions that aimed to extend the learning in respect to how we each could more consciously requisitely organise living our social anxiety. I too joined in completing sentences.

- If I were more like this…
- I am more aware of the social and personal complexity of my status and needing to act and my integrity and my vocation (my life curriculum and my life-learning) when…
- I am more likely to become more self-authoring as and when….
- A stretch for me to be appropriately larger in the world would be?
- A stretch for the world to be appropriately larger for me would be?
- A stretch for the world to be appropriately smaller for me would be?
- A stretch for me to be appropriately smaller in the world would be?
- "The world works best when…."

The participants became deliberate and slow in their manner of speaking as they took up the role of 'worthy reflexive sociodramatists'. Reflectively judging (discerning) remediating cultural status and organisational remediation as a life long developmental process. Each of us was able to make meaningful statements when completing the sentences indicating we had appropriated learning about sociodrama and that sociodrama for each of us was now more explicated.

At that point I became a satisfied and proud sociodrama workshop runner. I had freely and fully involved myself with the group and each group member and achieved progressing the explication of sociodrama through a developmental sequence of learning experiences that had led to all group members satisfied with their participation and learning.

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  ⭘ Satisfied              ⭘ Satisfied
    Sociodrama      +   +    Reflexive
    Explicator              Sociodramatists
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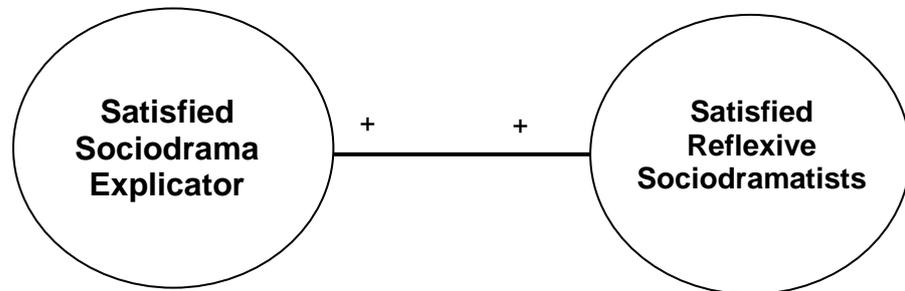
1.1   Social System Role Changes and Interventions

1.1.1   Description

A change is required in the participant from being initially curious about… to becoming personally involved in…. the process of sociodrama. A further change is appropriating the learning of each developmental step of the workshop and to go on to realise learning appropriate of personal social remediation. To understand sociodrama as an every day occurrence and challenging experience undertaken for the rest of our life. Sociodrama is a novel method so it requires openness to take in something so different from our usual culture.

The facilitator \ director is required to move from being prepared and confident of delivering an illuminating and remediative process to being spontaneous and deeply connected to the participants and sustaining deep connection for the duration of the workshop. A further requirement is to be in and of themselves a good and strong mirror of a curious participant and socius-role explorer and someone deeply interested in cultural motion as a phenomenon that is always going some where and at the same time a good launch pad to instigate personal transformation. Making for oneself a more transformative culture that is either evolving and or devolving, as the case may be, according to some developmental criteria such as requisite organisation.

1.1.2   Interventions for Next Time

When I next run this workshop I would, at the end of the first vignette's concretization, introduce an experience of surplus reality in respect to time. I would have 3 actors concretised on the stage.

- A person experiencing for the first time holding a papyrus scroll in Alexandria Egypt in 200BC.
- A person in 1630 in London at a Claxton printer publishing house experiencing holding a published book in their hand for the first time.
- The protagonist experiencing holding their choice of 3D-TV or I-Pad2 in their hand.

Role reversal between these characters will not only increase warmup to drama and surplus reality but warmup participants to the dialectic aspect of time when we all are in relation to culture as time.

1.2   Interventions Rationale

The interventions of the director and director directed progressive developments in the workshop are intended to extend the experience of the moments of creating new responses to engaging social system. To coach protagonists and auxiliaries to experience extending the moment of being in a new involvement with culture as it emerges and so not remain so passively 'embedded in' and 'subject to' social system.

2.0   Conclusions

Sociodrama is the dramatic enacting we experience when answering 3 of life's crucial questions.

- What shall I do next in my place in the world and with whom shall I do it?
- What can I do now I have decided what to do next and where and with whom?
- Having begun to act, how am I going while doing this right now?

Life requires us to deploy these questions constantly across the span of our life and we make different choices and create different meaning relative to the phase of life we are in and the amount of learning we have integrated in our lives from past experience.

The workshop adequately engaged the social system of participants' learning sociodrama and makes an adequate case study for sociodramatic intervention of a social system the participants are actually involved in.

Through the concluding sentence completions exercise participants demonstrated they were integrating the remediation they had appropriated in the workshop. The following day they were satisfied that what they had appropriated was valuable and that also the learning was encouraging them to continue sociodramatic learning and remediating.

The workshop can easily and fruitfully be expanded in length. Once the participants are infused with the method of seeing sociodrama as remediation that is reflexive of both themselves and their reference groups within a frame of a developing organisational requisition, then greater licence can be used to explore diverse protagonist centred sociodrama without losing consciousness of remediation as organisational and developmental requisition.

The fact that some were novices and the scope of the workshop was new to participants meant that more learning and less remediation was undertaken than would be the case for experienced sociodramatists. In this case the balance between explicating the method, mirroring the process and engaging the participants enacting their sociodrama was adequate.

Step 8 of the revised workshop structure is really important to the integrity of the workshop. It is necessary to allow time 'to make object', the main referent group for the group in situ; in this case a workshop explicating sociodrama. The activity begins with pairs sharing what is a relevant Reference Group for 'US' (this group).

The purpose is to assist participants to be self-critical in respect to themselves as a member of a reference group that is referent to this group. More space is made for sociometric assessment of the group in respect to ideal referent group and indeed each other as ideal sociodramatists. In this step, place can be given for the mirror technique and coaching the protagonist to ask questions of themselves from the mirror position when they are placed in the system and to ask questions of the referent system when they are placed as themselves as protagonist.

To me this activity is critical for three reasons.

- to raise awareness of the stance (preferred epistemological stage) of the protagonist and the group as a whole and
- the protagonist becoming cognisant of the epistemological stage of their individual stance in respect to a reference group's stance.
- Seeing themselves as connected via positive tele to others as co-workers

The additional personal reflexivity gained in this process makes efforts towards requisite organisation and hence transformation become more authentic.

The final conclusion to social system's sociodrama is always personal psychodrama.

Having achieved learning from their 'culture as school' and a remediation of their socius, the protagonist is left to ponder; 'why and how come me now? What is it like to be me now?'

I feel I am most connected with myself and others and group when doing this work and hope to do much more of it soon and for a long time.

3.0   Bibliography

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