

Section 2: The Practitioner's Corner

Who's Calling? Cell-Phone Sociometry

Connie Miller¹

Sociometrists seek ways to enliven interactive processes, which make the spontaneity state more accessible while addressing norms and structures that inhibit and distance people from one another. A high value is placed on integration, coherence, empathic processes, authenticity, and creative solving of shared concerns. The ultimate purpose is transcendence. However, as the director, how can that happen if my own ego is in the way? What happens if I focus outside of myself and become annoyed at and do not surrender myself to the group process? The challenge becomes one of, "How do I let go of control as a group leader? How do I increase my own trust in the group process?"

KEYWORDS: Creativity; ego; group action model; group process; psychodrama, resistance; sociometry; soul; Souldrama; spirituality; spiritual intelligence; psychology.

Recently, I completed a summer of volunteering in Indonesia to teach Souldrama (Miller, 2007, 2010) to pastoral counselors, health-care workers, psychologists, and teachers. One of the groups was held in Java with 120 participants. For the majority of the participants, the action methods of Souldrama, psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy were brand new. It was important for myself and the other facilitators to gain the trust of the group members who had never experienced action methods. Trust and faith are vital in any process. It was our task to warm up the group by developing cohesion and connection among group members. We all spoke different languages, including the group members and the five facilitators from different countries.

On Day 1, following a history of J. Moreno, we did a warm-up asking each participant to play the role of a fantasy character from childhood and to introduce themselves to each other. We had a huge group of Supermen and superheroes. I asked myself, "Will this large group of superheroes reflect the group ego and mine as well?" This group continued to joke and talk throughout the first two days, causing many distractions.

¹ Spring Lake Counseling Center and International Institute of Souldrama. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Connie Miller, 620 Shore Rd., Spring Lake Heights, NJ 07762. E-mail: connie@souldrama.com.

There was a demonstration each day by different volunteers teaching some of the skills of psychodrama, sociometry, music therapy, and the philosophy of group psychotherapy and Souldrama. By the last day we were ready to do a psychodrama. On the beginning of the third day, the group was warmed up and enthusiastic about participating in this new method of group counseling. Indonesia has the highest use of cell phones in the world. The problem we had was the use of cell phones during groups—texting and receiving calls. Participants were repeatedly invited—to no avail—to turn off their cell phones during the group sessions. By Day 3, there were many interruptions during the group. I was getting increasingly annoyed by all of the distractions.

Then I asked myself, “Who is really running this group? Maybe this is all happening for a reason.” I decided to surrender and on the third day use the cell phones as an intervention. I was ready to scream.

I asked each person to write his or her cell-phone number on a piece of paper and put the numbers in a box. Each person then turned on his or her phone and was instructed to take a number from the box. On the word “go” they were to call the number they chose. Our interpreter randomly took one number out of the box so that one person would not get a call. Imagine 120 cell phones ringing! You can see this in action on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TeBO2jpfu4>).

Each person was told to find the person he or she had called and to put a hand on the back of that person. We had a large chain in the room. Interestingly enough, the person who did not get the call was the participant who, on the first day, played the fantasy role of Judas. He said, “I did not get a call.” I told him he did. I told him, “God is calling—would you like to speak with him?” He agreed and the drama began.

He said, “I am angry at God.” As I directed, he chose an auxiliary to play God. The man he chose had selected the fantasy role of Jesus on the first day. I now had “Judas” confronting “Jesus.”

The protagonist had two issues. One was his addictive behavior, for which he felt he needed to be forgiven. The other was his anger at God for taking his father when he was still a child. The drama was completed and, in the end, many people were crying and sharing. Interestingly enough, the people he chose to be his auxiliaries were all in the initial superheroes group. During the sharing, the participant who played the role of Jesus had the same issue as did the protagonist. The men were crying after the drama. This was the first time for many of them that they could cry in public. The sense of incredible relief in the room was palpable.

Earlier in the day many people had bought “I love Souldrama” tee shirts that were sold by the sponsoring organization. The tee shirts have a big heart on the front. Before the afternoon session, I took pictures of the group wearing the shirts. These people turned out to be the main auxiliaries: God, the person who played the protagonist as a child, the protagonist’s father, and the angels. The protagonist was the only one without the large heart on his chest. That evening he came in with a new tee shirt. There was dead silence in the room throughout the drama and not one cell phone disturbed us.

There are a large number of pastors in Indonesia and their problems are universal. Instead of having many psychologists and counselors, most of the

counseling is done through the church. There are 17,000 islands in Indonesia, with many churches and pastors. There is nowhere for the pastors to go to work out their own addictive behavior, as many of them are set up by their parishioners to be God. It is also easy for me as a director to take that role and to remember that I am a cocreator with the divine as well and to listen to that still voice within.

I truly felt the presence of Moreno and the cocreation with God in the group. Who was calling? God was truly calling to me to go with the flow and let go of my own ego. All of our hearts were touched as we all felt called to help further the future of mankind.

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