

# Sociodrama:

to meet, to grow, to understand

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L'Harmattan

# **Sociodrama: to meet, to grow, to understand**

**A practical handbook on Sociodramatic work with students in Swedish schools and  
with unaccompanied refugee youths**

**Mariolina Werner Guarino and Monica Westberg**



## **Summary**

We want to write a practical handbook with many examples that professional sociodramatists can use with young people workers or teachers, to present the specificity and the benefits of sociodrama. Based on our experience, we feel the need to provide a table of contents and suggestions on what is important to think about, and in which order it is opportune to plan the contents and the program. This booklet could even function as a textbook that the sociodrama students in training can have as a guideline for their course.

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*"We are in school for an enormous number of hours, for a lot of years. But none of these hours teach us how we function in our daily lives, how our emotions control us, why we get angry, sad or scared, why we feel lonely even when we are online day and night, how we manage our relationships, how we can find motivation when we feel demoralised. We'll just have to guess."*

A high school student

## Introduction

Who are we?

Monica Westberg

I was born in a small town and moved to Stockholm at the age of fifteen to work as a nanny. It was a lousy salary but the boy I looked after was wonderful. Despite only seven years of elementary school, there were many jobs to apply for. I was young in a time when everything was possible. When adult education reform came along, I finished primary school, then graduated and went on to university. Education was my subject and Paulo Freire, who in a short time taught large parts of Brazil's population to read and write, became my hero.

When I encountered Moreno's methods at a conference on Humanistic Psychology and Pedagogy, I was so deeply involved that I immediately started groups in psychodrama with the help of a Danish leader/psychodramatist. We invited a summer camp to our country house in the Stockholm archipelago. Fifty participants from four to sixty years of age came, built a village out of their tents and studied Moreno's philosophy. Upon arrival, the participants wondered where the organisational group was because no one understood that everything was organised by one person. The island had no cars, but I had borrowed a three-wheeled moped from the neighbours, on which I went to the shop to pick up the day's food. The summer camp was the prelude to a strong network that was seen in different contexts for many years.

Two years later, I went to the United States for my first training session in Moreno's methods. He was dead but his wife Zerka Moreno ran the Institute in Beacon, New York State. The training and travel was expensive so I asked Zerka if she would consider coming to Sweden to teach. "Do you have a group there then?", she asked. "Yes, that would be no problem," I replied optimistically, thinking of the participants at the summer camp. Most of them came from the humanities network I met at my first conference. In the autumn of that year, Zerka Moreno was invited by another group in Stockholm. She then asked if they wanted to participate in a longer training and got a yes in response. So I became involved in the training that started the following year.

As soon as my own training was finished, Peter Kellermann and I started having psychodrama groups. Some friends invited me to have weekend courses in Trondheim, Norway. This work led to Eva Röine and me starting the Norwegian Psychodrama School in 1986 with over 40 students. In 1985 I belonged to a group that had a training through the Psychodrama Association in Stockholm and that curriculum was helpful for us in starting the Norway course. We had good cooperation across borders to the joy of all of us. There was a great interest in the methods so in 1987 the Psychodrama Academy was started with the purpose of conducting research and development of Moreno's methods. The driving force was Ingrid Göransson who had been researching the impact of work on health for many years.

In the Psychodrama Academy my role has been trustee, teacher and, in recent years, also chairman. The first student to receive a diploma with us was a professor of social work. I

remember it was a strange feeling when I, who deep down still felt like someone who had only 7 years of elementary school, handed the diploma to him.

Monica Zuretti from Argentina came to us and brought new perspectives. Jonathan Fox taught Playback Theatre. When the Peace Academy opened in Norway, I had the opportunity to participate and learn from Johan Galtung, the world's first professor of Peace and Conflict Management. The PsychodramaAcademy was the host organisation when the first meeting to form FEPTO (Federation of Psychodrama Organisations) was held. Göran Högborg, started training in Russia and Bulgaria with the help of SIDA, (Sweden's government agency for development cooperation). We strove to reduce poverty and oppression around the world. We thought it was important to have a democratic association where the countries from Eastern Europe could participate. Read more on the PsychodramaAcademy website, [psykodramaakademin.se](http://psykodramaakademin.se)

Mariolina Werner Guarino

I was born in Milan, Italy and moved to Sweden "for love" in 1978. I was lucky enough to encounter sociodrama as a teenager, through two Argentinean psychologists, Mr and Mrs Bermolén-Dal Porto from the University of Buenos Aires. Their knowledge, their love and the long sociodramatic experience with them certainly influenced my whole future life. Not least in the effort it took to leave my homeland, relatives and friends because I wanted to marry my husband and move to chilly Sweden. My mother was not exactly happy...

Drawing on the work of my Argentinian friends, mainly psychodrama and sociodrama, but also Assagioli's Psychosynthesis, Transactional Analysis, and my own, unusual technique of interpreting drawings (disegno onirico), I soon found my way to the Psychodrama Academy. There I became a psychodramatist and sociodramatist in the nineties. The Psychodrama Academy offered deep theoretical and practical expertise, a warm atmosphere and a wide range of training, often mixed with seminars with international stars. Sociodrama training lasts several years and is not just about learning: it involves a long and personal process of maturation.

I like sociodrama because it is an active method that suits me who tends to "overthink". I am fascinated to see how much what we did sociodramatically helped me to understand myself and grow in the direction I wanted. And I certainly had a long way to go... Trying to create a sociodrama course for high school students was then an absolute no-brainer for me.

Parallel to the training at the Psychodrama Academy, I extended my training as an interpreter and language teacher in French and Italian to become a psychology teacher. Psychology eventually became my main field of work along with sociodrama. I am currently working for the Swedish National Agency for Education on the new psychology curricula for upper secondary schools. My goal is to make sociodrama courses elective in the near future as part of the psychology curriculum at high school and university.

I work mostly in a secondary school and use Sociodrama in the teaching of psychology as well as in my work as a mentor to meet all the challenges that can arise in a multicultural suburban school. In addition, I collaborate with a Swedish teacher who teaches recent emigres and we use Sociodrama for language learning and social skills.



As mentioned earlier, this handbook was created in the framework of the European Erasmus+ project "Performers"<sup>1</sup>, in which Monica Westberg and I were invited to participate. The project has opened up whole new worlds for all of us and created lifelong relationships with people working with this method across Europe. The participants come from Hungary, England, Portugal, Bulgaria, Serbia/Croatia, Belgium, Greece, Norway and Sweden. Throughout the project we have been able to encounter different ways of promoting child and youth health through sociodrama: with young people in prison, in various difficult social situations, with refugees and new arrivals, and not least, at all levels of school, from primary school to university.

Our warmest thanks go to the colleagues who collaborated with us:

Anita Grünbaum

Drama teacher and pioneer of drama education. Anita has written textbooks on drama as a pathway to knowledge about conflict management and minorities. Through her work at Västerberg Folkhögskola, she has contributed to the fact that drama teachers are now present in many schools and cultural schools in Sweden. She has encouraged our writing and edited the final volume. For many years she was on the board of the PsychodramaAcademy where she contributed her vast knowledge.

Wessenyelesh Beshah Kidane

Language teacher and teacher for language introduction in secondary school. Her openness, enthusiasm and the warm relationships she manages to create with her students have made many of our sociodramatic experiences possible.

And last but not least

Judith Teszáry

Colleague and friend, psychodramatist and sociodramatist with decades of experience in many different fields, as a sociodrama trainer, supervisor in organisations and in health care and as an expert in conflict management. It is thanks to her commitment, expertise and her links with Hungarian sociodramatists that the whole Performers Project has been created and implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> [sociodramanetwork.com](http://sociodramanetwork.com)

## Background

The Corona pandemic has taken us by surprise, abruptly changing our habits and our circumstances and throwing us mercilessly into a new world. It has taught us that many of our values such as stability, continuity, security, tradition must, if not be replaced, at least interact and be integrated with other qualities such as flexibility, agility, adaptability, the ability to find new and more appropriate solutions quickly. We, our young people in Swedish schools and all the young people who come to Sweden from other countries, must all learn new skills if we want to face a world in constant change.

Sociodrama is a valuable and safe tool in this respect. Sociodrama is still a relatively new concept in the Swedish school world although, together with Psychodrama and Sociometry created by J. Levi Moreno in the early 1920s in Vienna, it is the basis for all group therapies. One of our principals, now an enthusiastic supporter of our work, recently admitted to the entire teaching staff that "he didn't believe for a second my idea of such a course", when I proposed the introduction of a course on social skills and personal development in autumn 1998. I was careful how I used the words, neither Psychodrama nor Sociodrama were allowed to be mentioned aloud. But I was allowed to propose my course among the school's Individual Choices. It was chosen by quite a few curious students and was then allowed to start in the spring of 1999. The fact that the course grew exponentially in size in just over three years speaks volumes about the benefits of finding a method that meets students' needs, fears, life issues and expectations. Experiences with sociodrama for and with newcomers have also borne fruit and certainly given many newly arrived young people and unaccompanied minors a kick in the right direction on their complicated path to integration. So what is Sociodrama? And how can sociodramatic work be practically implemented in different Swedish contexts?

# Chapter 1

## What is sociodrama?

Sociodrama is a flexible method for working with individuals and groups exploring the different systems in which we live and work. The focus of sociodramatic work is on relationships within the group, between groups, and between the group and the various components of society. This is created through active, gestalt techniques where participants are engaged with both body and mind. Unlike Psychodrama, which focuses on the individual and his/her intrapsychic problems, the "group as a whole" is the focus of Sociodrama, with its collective, common aspects, needs or issues.

J.L Moreno created Sociodrama as a method to safeguard the mental and social health of the world. As early as the 1920s, he claimed that sociodramatic work - like all therapeutic intervention in general - could not have as its goal anything other than the whole of humanity. Unfortunately, the Corona crisis has made his theories more relevant than ever.

Sociodrama is now used worldwide in a variety of contexts: in schools and universities to explore local situations or social issues, in the workplace for team-building and conflict management, to explore different cultures or culture clashes, as tutoring in all professions, as role training, to understand social events, and to promote democracy and political change at all levels and in all contexts. And this without forgetting the individual.

Sociodramatic active, practical work is based on the concepts of spontaneity and creativity: instead of narrating or discussing a situation or a dilemma, group participants create live scenes, where different social roles interact, where participants can change perspectives, use both verbal and non-verbal communication, practice empathy, share thoughts and insights.

Sociodrama uses a variety of techniques, such as role-playing, mirroring, which is a way of stepping back and looking at the situation from the outside, so that you can become more objective, or soliloquy, where participants can think out loud and try to express things they would not dare to say otherwise. You can also "freeze the scene" to have time to think about what you are doing and gain more cognitive insights, or to take a reflective break if the action gets too heated. In addition, you get to switch positions between different groupings in the social game and participants get to see situations from different perspectives.

Using the techniques of sociodrama, and by portraying different situations on a stage, participants learn to explore new or challenging circumstances, to dare to try new behaviours in a protected and safe environment, and to understand themselves and others. And together with them find new, more appropriate, more democratic solutions. Participants have the opportunity to examine situations of which they are a part, which concern them personally, but in a more objective way and this increases their social awareness.

For example, the refugee issue can be examined by bringing on stage the refugees, the inhabitants of the places where the refugees arrive, representatives of the municipality or the social services, the school, the new comrades, but also the families left behind in the country of origin. By representing the different social categories, values, desires and experiences can

be played out through spontaneous improvisation. After the sociodrama, the group can reflect on and analyse the global image experienced by the members in the play itself.

In schools and at teaching level, Sociodrama creates an opportunity for participants to learn together often in a very engaging, personal and fun way. Philosophical concepts, historical events, psychological cases or DNA functions can be broken down into components, different actors or different moments and transformed into an actively portrayed version. This can promote the learning of difficult subjects but also openness, hope and empathy between students. Being able to explore social situations in a non-judgemental context, concretely and 'in action', makes all our young people in all kinds of contexts want to express their thoughts and feelings more freely, creating participation even for those who sometimes find it difficult to speak in groups.

Human beings are social creatures who are created and grow in relationships. In the group there is an energy that transcends the individuals themselves. Links are created between the group members, forming a synergy, an energetic field, where understanding and psychological processes are facilitated and simplified. Moreno called this "Tele" (can be linked to Jung's theories of co-conscious and co-unconscious). This is why sociodrama always works with groups.

### **Sociodrama in relation to drama pedagogy**

Drama education is a close relative of sociodrama. Drama pedagogy in its present form can be traced back to the early 20th century and developed in parallel with J.L. Moreno's experiments with stage forms in Vienna and the surrounding area. Inspirers of drama education included Ellen Key with the book *The Century of the Child*, John Dewey, the group around him and Winifred Ward with drama in education in the USA. What we often call reform education was formulated and practised - not only in the USA but also in Europe and Sweden. In England, early exponents of drama in education were Finlay Johnson and Caldwell Cook and in Sweden, Ester Boman. Since the 1970s, it is possible to discern how sociodrama and drama pedagogy have cross-fertilized and learned from each other.

There are many similarities. Group dynamics are in focus. Role taking/role changing is a feature of both methods. A non-judgmental approach is seen as a prerequisite for creative processes. Familiarisation with the working method is necessary. The basic structure is currently similar, with opening round, warm-up, action, reflection.

A difference lies in the choice of subject and direct or indirect approaches. This means that in sociodrama the sociodramatist can go directly to a problem that is expressed or unspoken. Refugees' own experiences can be portrayed as they are experienced. The drama educator would choose a symbolic approach through a story or a generic scene that groups create together from different experiences and which they stage in an improvisation. Another difference is that the drama teacher can also work entirely or partially with theatre productions.

There are drama teachers trained in psychodrama and sociodrama. There are sociodramatists trained in drama pedagogy. Drama educators and sociodramatists,

separately and together, have knowledge of methods for working with fragile and vulnerable groups such as teenagers and refugees.

## Chapter 2

**What is the world like today? or “Being young and going to school in Sweden”**

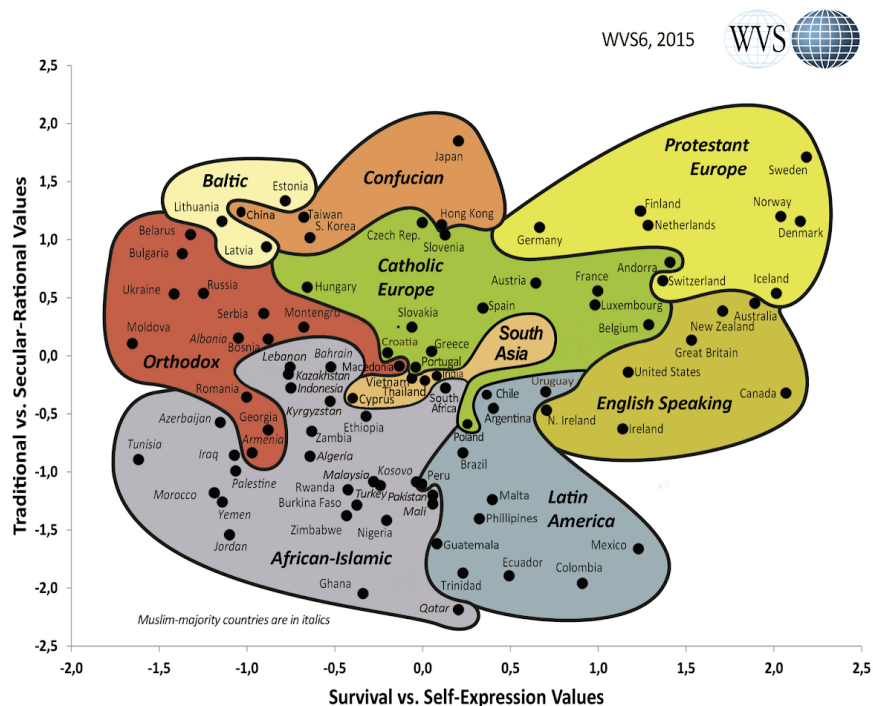
**A picture of Sweden in 2021 - what kind of society will immigrant children face?**

There are an infinite number of ways to describe what kind of society Sweden is.

One way to look at the kind of society we have created is by studying the Institute for Future Studies' material. They look at the values that people hold in different parts of the world. On the map below you can see that Sweden is a country that is extreme. We are the most secular country in the world. We value individual freedom most highly as a truly valuable asset. We talk about equality and the equal value of all people. There are guidelines on how companies should conduct their business ethics and there are lots of documents written about laws and regulations that should be followed. For example, we were the first country in the world to legislate that it is forbidden to hit one's children. It is also forbidden, among other things, to possess drugs or to buy sexual services.

Our country has grown by more than 500,000 people in the last 10 years. When growth is so rapid, municipalities do not have time to provide housing, schools and childcare. Many of those who come here come from countries that are organised in a completely different way. On the map below you can see how different countries' values are grouped. From strong religious affiliation to secularism, from strong values of conservative ideals to libertarian individualistic ideals. In the meeting of these differences, problems arise. Our inability to understand the scope of the problem must be seen in the light of the values that prevail in different parts of the world. According to the worldwide survey carried out every five years, Sweden is a very odd country. We stand out from all the others on a number of issues.

The map below shows what I mean.



[https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Culture\\_Map\\_2017\\_conclusive.png](https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Culture_Map_2017_conclusive.png)

At the top right corner you will find Sweden, which means that we value independence and self-development. We are the most secularised population in the world, valuing science and proven experience very highly. We have the highest trust in the state and expect to be supported if we get into trouble. Young people who want to study get loans so their choices can be made independently. There is a high acceptance of paying a high tax because it gives us a society with services at different levels. When you get sick, we have almost free access to healthcare which in many other countries ruins a family if someone suffers a serious illness.

We have developed an extreme individualism which comes at a price and many feel lonely. Getting into society when you are new often requires you to take the initiative and join an association. There are many different associations that are run democratically and receive support for their activities from the local authority or the state. These associations form a strong network that in many ways balances the strong state.

Civil society exists as a force that balances out some of the weaknesses of our society. An example of this is the spin off that happened in the small town where I live now. It was an event that was held for the fifth year in a row with an increasing number of participants. Some parents who lost their child to cancer thought they wanted to do something to honour the memory of their little daughter who died when she was 5 years old. The money raised this year was over one million SEK and will be donated to families with children suffering from cancer to make their lives easier and create good experiences during their illness.

In the lower left corner of the map you will find communities built around clans. They are strongly influenced by religion and family cohesion is often high. If you conform to the norms, you will have the support of your family. Unfortunately, there is a strong oppression of women who have no rights and are completely subordinate to men. When people from these parts of the world arrive in Sweden, many culture clashes occur.

Difficulties in learning the new language and major shortcomings in the way the Immigrations Agency receives the youngsters, have left many newcomers in problems like unemployment and living in overcrowded flats. Unfortunately, in recent years, several criminal networks have been created that deal in weapons and drugs and include many young people. There have been shootings, with some 20-30 deaths a year, something we have never had before in our country. As new arrivals are not used to the state being there to help, there is a fear when dealing with police officers and other officials. New Swedes are particularly affected as fear of strangers rises in our society and difficulties for cross-communication between groups grow.

There is research showing how different cultural groups adapt to Swedish society. Some groups that have arrived have completely refrained from applying for benefits during their first time in Sweden. They manage their own affairs, do not ask for benefits but prefer not to pay taxes either. They often engage in square trading, which has brought life to various centres that were previously mostly deserted. This is good, but since the services you can get in Sweden cost money, there are conflicts. When parties today focus on immigrants as a problem, it also affects everyone who is a model citizen. By creating a scapegoat mentality, a gap is created where everything that does not work can be blamed on immigration. Which is, of course, completely wrong.

The large number of refugees who arrived in autumn 2015 posed a major challenge in terms of creating a good reception system, and at times chaos ensued. In a few months, 160,000 people arrived in need of housing and medical care. Civil society was mobilised and many people made great efforts for the strangers who arrived. A movement called Refugee Welcome organised networks to help those who could not be helped by the regular refugee reception system.

Then, suddenly, political opinion swung. Sweden closed its borders. Only quota refugees would be allowed in. At EU level, there was hard work for a fair distribution of refugees - most from Syria, where the war was subjecting civilians to horrific treatment. On the internet, you could follow the progress of IS supporters. For those who care about their fellow human beings, the EU's lack of a humane approach to all these refugees was a blow. For years, immigration has been the focus of political attention. When a party with roots in Nazism takes a firm stand against immigration, the debate becomes highly polarised.

The Institute for Future Studies has also carried out research to see how those who have arrived in Sweden are faring. There are a variety of questions that the participants have answered. Encouragingly, the majority seem to like it here. Most want to maintain their sense of belonging to both their old country and the new one.



## **Interview with some 15-16 year olds: what do they think society is like?**

We have interviewed some young people (Year 9) about their views on society and here are their answers.

The young people answer directly, without even noticing it: "The young people in Stockholm..." It is clear from the very first answers that they claim that there is a very big difference between being young in Stockholm or Gothenburg, as they are, and being young in a smaller community in the countryside. They perceive young people in big cities as more democratic and more open - or at least they want to appear as such. They claim that young people in smaller towns often have a poor view of women, just want to drive around in their souped up tractors and use the "n-word", which is unthinkable if you live in Stockholm.

What stresses them out is the demand for the latest and greatest in clothes, shoes, bags and mobile phones, and many find it hard to buck the trend. Self-image is linked to what you have. They say it's important to understand that many children fall victim to the consumer society and to accept being seen as a 'geek' if you want to do things differently. Buying yourself something nice is no longer a pleasure, it's a burden.

For very many young people, it's about having as many followers as possible on social media sites like Instagram, Snapchat and Tik Tok. Facebook they leave to old ladies. It's fun, but it's also a stressor to always have to compare yourself to other people's perfect (retouched) photos and perfect lives! And, of course, having as many real friends as possible. The boy among the interviewees who spent the least time on social media was online for about four and a half hours, more than two of which was spent listening to music. But eight or nine and even ten hours is not uncommon: it has become a compulsion that creates poor health and anxiety. Often social media takes time away from sleep, school, sport and exercise.

Another stress factor is linked to all the choices that children have to make today, perhaps the most difficult being the choice of secondary school. In the past there were a few upper secondary paths to choose from, now according to the National Agency for Education there are 18 upper secondary paths. I have checked, see the Swedish National Agency for Education's website<sup>2</sup>. These eighteen paths are divided into different specialisations. Since each path has several specialisations, a child graduating from grade nine has fifty-seven, FIFTY SEVEN! different choices. Is it really reasonable to ask a sixteen year old to already know what they want to study, to know what they want to be? And once you've decided your first choice, you also have to choose the secondary school itself. The young people interviewed, who have just submitted their five or six choices in order of preference, testify to a constant nagging thought: what if I made the wrong choice? The wrong path? The wrong school? The wrong order of priority? And - panic! - what if I don't get in?

Socially, they claim that many young people have "zero grasp" of social issues, don't really care about anything and follow Greta Thunberg on Instagram "because it gives the right image". They note that many lack ideals, have "no guidelines", feel weak, which leads them to become selfish and self-centred.

One of the boys interviewed, who has been through several divorces from his mother and father, unusually mature for his 16 years, says he has "become hardened and matured

through the process, probably because he never denied what happened and became both very sad and very angry and recently learned to accept what happened". He claims that divorces have become so common that the young people he knows no longer feel it is a burden.

He says that emo culture is now spreading more than ever, even in the "nice school in town" where he attends: it's trendy to be depressed! It's not about getting together to encourage each other to feel better at all, but getting together to reaffirm that nothing is good. In his words, they meet "to gloat about how bad they feel". They claim that psychologists understand absolutely nothing.

For other friends who are doing relatively well, there is still a lot of stress at school. They link the stress of grades to the fact that most of them study for the grade and not because what they are studying might be interesting. This makes school, along with everything else, the ultimate stress factor in their lives.

In conclusion, many young people find the world today difficult and stressful. If younger children are still into sports, middle school children seem to have few or no genuine interests or ideals and are often angry and sad. They claim that many feel lost about the future and the challenges of society. In other words, they feel quite ill-equipped to face life.

## Chapter 3

### Different young people we meet - needs and benefits of Sociodrama

We have worked with sociodrama in many different ways and settings: at the secondary school in regular classes, at the secondary school with newcomers and with newcomers in other institutions.

#### Secondary school students

A typical secondary school in a Swedish suburb is, for example, the one I have been working in since 1995. It is a school with a large number of pupils who have their roots in other cultures. Some have lived in Sweden for a few years or were born here to parents from other countries. They are usually very well integrated, and at the same time very attached and proud of their parents' culture. This is where I started a course on social skills in 1999, as part of Individual Choice. As a language teacher and mentor, I saw daily how students struggled not only with school work, but also with issues, problems and events that never received attention or answers in the regular school subjects. Instead, these problems took both time and energy away from the regular classroom. It does not take deep psychological or educational knowledge to see that pupils whose parents are divorcing or who have themselves been recently dumped by a partner, who are experiencing serious culture clashes, or who have a parent with an alcohol problem, have neither the energy nor the interest to deal with school work. Institutionalised forms of schooling are often not sufficient to meet the needs of all. If you are lucky, as in our school, there is a psychologist once a week for a few hours and a counsellor who often works part-time. Moreover, pupils sometimes choose not to use these facilities for fear of being labelled as strange, sick or deviant. Most know that they are going through normal stages of development and a best friend is often very good enough. It should be added here that in schools with a high immigrant population compared to other schools, there is also a relatively high number of students who are deeply religious. They claim that faith often helps them to find peace and meaning in life.

A crucial assumption in our context is that teachers should not engage in any form of therapeutic work and that pupils with problems requiring professional help should be offered the opportunity to see a counsellor or a psychologist in school or outside as quickly as possible. The question then arises: if adolescence is itself a period of great change, dreams, difficult choices, internal and external conflicts, where do all the 'healthy' young people go who are 'just' struggling with everyday worries about the future, media influences, family problems and a doubtful self-image?

How can we, without providing therapy they do not need anyway, take care of all those who "just" wonder about future plans, relationships, self-esteem or feel lonely, outcast, worried, deviant, misunderstood, confused, tempted, irritated, angry, as all human beings do sometimes? What do we do BEFORE they get depressed, start using drugs, join violent gangs? I had a whole class of students a few years ago constantly worried about a classmate who ate extremely little at lunch, just got thinner and thinner, more and more

evasive and irritated. She was not taken into care by any agency because she could not be classed as depressed, had a BMI that was still acceptable, and claimed herself to be coping brilliantly. She had to wait until her BMI fell below a certain level. Is this a sensible way to deal with the problematic lives of our students?

It is human nature to seek solutions. Many young people are totally addicted to social media and are extremely lonelier and more fragile than the adults around them think. Some struggle with the clash of cultures. Many adults we meet tend to believe that these young people feel that life is ahead of them, with amazing opportunities spread out at their feet. It's not.

Students need a forum to reflect on all the things they are confronted with on a daily basis: the situation of their families, their societies and, not least, the world, led by the climate crisis. Providing pupils with a context that gives them time and space for reflection, self-awareness, stress and conflict management and basic knowledge of practical group dynamics during their school years should be a matter of course. And this in a group where they can experience empathy, patience, where they can recognise each other and back each other up. Are there more important skills at all?

### **New arrivals at secondary school**

The young new arrivals we meet in our upper secondary school are studying Swedish as a second language, so-called Språkintrödn, and have lived in Sweden for a very short time, some of them only a few weeks. The teacher we worked with participated in our Erasmus project and is young, enthusiastic and creates a warm and deep relationship with the students.

According to her, it is difficult to define the group of "newcomers" because the participants in her beginners' courses are very different from each other. They come from very different countries, from Afghanistan, to Argentina, the USA, Greece and Turkey, they come from big cities or from small, isolated villages. When they arrive, they have very different backgrounds: some have been at school for a long time, have strong study habits and speak several languages fluently. Others have hardly been to school and have to start by learning a completely different alphabet. It is almost impossible to group them together in the same concept, even if they are grouped together in the same class.

However, in our experience, they have one thing in common: although many of them have difficult situations behind them, the vast majority still have a very strong belief in their future, are very committed, often eager to go to school and, as my colleague put it, "have a plan". They feel a very strong link to their families, whom they want to help, protect and save. They dream of sending financial help to them if they remain in their country of origin. And if the family is in Sweden, they want to learn Swedish quickly in order to be able to act as an interpreter and support in relation to the new society. In the face of the extremely individualistic society that exists in Sweden, conflicts easily arise. The group, not just parents and siblings, controls their lives as well as the wider group of cousins, uncles and aunts for generations, neighbours of the same culture and even strangers who see them.

For many Swedish students, this is not easy to understand. For example, if they fall in love with a person from another culture, from another background that their parents do not like, they are prepared to "sacrifice the family" (as some newly arrived pupils in our school put it to

us) for their own desires and needs without much effort. Society encourages them to do so! If they want to study something the family doesn't want or move to another city, the state can give them study grants and the family is relegated to the background of their lives. Our newly arrived students told us that they would never prioritise themselves over family in such a case, they would never even think of it. Moreover, they think in completely different terms and have completely different needs that they have to prioritise: getting a residence permit, taking care of more fragile family members, getting an education and eventually a job.

People who have worked with migrant children for a long time also see a big difference between children who have moved to Sweden before the age of 11 or 12 and those who arrived later, in the middle of the teenage crisis. If you have to move at a time when your identity is being formed and you happen to live in a segregated environment, your child's identity often becomes an "immigrant identity" strongly tied to the clan, says a teacher with very long experience in teaching immigrants. Some consciously break when they speak Swedish, the distorted language has become part of their identity. They exclusively meet people of the same origin and only move in the same environments.

It is not difficult to understand that conflicts may arise between the Swedish pupils and the pupils of the Language Introduction. However, conflicts arise much more often between our newcomers and second generation pupils in our regular classes, those who were born in Sweden and are Swedish citizens. When we in the school wanted to have a meeting between our classes, almost half of the students in my "regular" class, many with foreign backgrounds, did not want to meet the newly arrived students in Language Introduction. These students also carry unresolved identity issues and it was clear that they did not want to be put on an equal footing with the newcomers. They claimed that they felt insecure and afraid to meet the immigrant boys! I even received requests from some parents who asked me not to write absences for their daughters when they were absent from class on the day of our meeting.

Another example is working with newcomers together with a regular Swedish class. The work came about as a result of some conflicts at school, when some Swedish girls had felt offended by some immigrant boys' looks or comments. They had raised the problem with the mentors and the school management.

The newcomers seek contact, sometimes with a comment that in another country would be interpreted as a compliment, but which is interpreted here as "dirty" and intrusive, even as sexual harassment. In our experience, it is precisely in such cases that Sociodrama can be very useful. Talking about such taboo topics in some countries, and really understanding what is allowed in Sweden and what is classified as sexual harassment, can be very difficult and sometimes leads to even more misunderstandings and greater distance. The results are quite different if you can see these situations in a portrayed form, with many points of view at the same time. The possibility of understanding the thoughts, feelings and circumstances of others is increased by changing roles and putting oneself in the shoes of others. As we all know, it is easier to understand another person if you "spend a whole day in their moccasins". Sociodrama offers such an opportunity through role reversal or change of position. Sociodrama also facilitates the emotional understanding of what lies beneath: fear, insecurity, anxiety, lack of trust, the difficulty of accepting what is ok or not ok. These are emotions that all people, regardless of culture, share and recognise.

We wanted to bring out what unites us, what we have in common instead of what divides us and we still managed to have some meetings in school. Our sociodramatic performance about how to pick up a girl or how to behave in different cultures also, with a little imagination, had many very funny elements, which helped everyone to feel less tense about an uncomfortable topic. We tried some exercises and role changes in large groups. The most active participant in our sociodramatic exercises was a boy who felt ostracised on many different levels: as an immigrant in front of the Swedes, as a homosexual in front of his original family and as a student because he was older than the others. Both classes then went out three times for hands-on activities (we tried going to a climbing wall). On the last day, we sat together after practice and ate cookies and finally felt that some shy genuine encounters were still possible and that some of the prejudices had faded away.

### **New arrivals in different institutions in Sweden**

The young people with whom the Psychodrama Academy was commissioned to work were boys aged between 14 and 20. A few girls were included, but it was a dangerous journey, so many families forbade their girls to leave. They came from many different countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, but also Belarus and Belarusian and other former Soviet countries.

As things stood in Sweden in the early 2000s, all the new arrivals wanted to come to the municipalities where they could find their compatriots. For Södertälje, just south of Stockholm, for example, this meant that its population grew at a record rate. This caused problems with housing and places in childcare and schools. Health services were hard-pressed to cope with a doubling in the number of patients without the time to hire new staff. Many of those who arrived were in need of medical and psychiatric treatment for the traumas they had suffered in their home countries and on the refugee routes to Sweden. It therefore became necessary to get more municipalities to accept the new arrivals. Later, legislation was passed that forced all municipalities to take in asylum seekers.

Psychologist Christina Sougurides was commissioned by the government to influence the country's municipalities to accept unaccompanied minors from different parts of the world. Christina was employed by Swera, an organisation set up when the Refugee Council was closed down. Swera's task was to develop methods for the reception of asylum seekers. She was inspired after attending the Psychodrama Academy's seminar on conflict management. She wanted us to develop a plan for working with the unaccompanied young people who had started to arrive in Sweden. There was great resistance in most Swedish municipalities to accept unaccompanied refugee youth. Our task was to help with conflict management and other difficulties for both staff and young people in the places where it had been agreed to arrange accommodation and study for asylum-seeking children and young people.

Working with sociodrama with refugee youth is quite different from working in a school context. In working on this book, it has become clear how important the context in which you are working is. Mariolina Werner's work at Huddingegymnasiet has a clear framework. There is a study plan and the school has accepted the way of working. When the Psychodrama Academy was commissioned to work with unaccompanied refugee youths, there was no

uniform framework or already developed guidelines for how the work should be conducted. It really became a process work where each meeting with the different groups guided the content of what we could work with.

However, our work followed the all-important pattern of sociodrama: warming up, action and sharing. Later, when I presented some of the games we had done to a group working with traumatised children, they were horrified by the games, such as the 'The whole sea is storming' exercise. The game is described on page 26 of the text.

They felt it was too strong for them to do this exercise. With hindsight, I cannot agree with them. Even this simple exercise made the young people realise the importance of cooperation and reliability. The mood of the group was noticeably relieved when they managed to get the whole group into the right place.

There are countless examples of challenging questions that we had to answer:

- Now I have found a way to make a living! said one guy proudly to me during a break. I'm going to sell cigarettes because I can do it cheaply by not having to pay taxes!
- Yes, that was a creative thought..., I replied. What do you think your father would have said about that if he were alive?
- Well ...it came out a bit hesitant. Why do you ask that?
- The tax is used to build schools and offers health care for everyone in our country, so most people think that we all have to pay for that even if it stings sometimes. Surely you who are so talented and speak many languages can find something better than being a smuggler.

Well, he hadn't thought of that....

Until the next time we met, he would think about what he wanted to be when he went back to school. In addition, during the following summer, we ran a play-learning course to give these young men a new role where they could find challenge and enjoyment.

## Chapter 4

The Swedish National Agency for Education's general goals for the upper secondary school and our practical suggestions for different types of use of the course.

### **General goals of the Swedish National Agency for Education**

Teachers and school management are very keen that every course run in the school should meet the requirements of the Swedish National Agency for Education. The curricula for upper secondary education/Gy11's values<sup>3</sup>, guidelines and goals emphasise that pupils should acquire valuable knowledge, and also grow in their understanding of democratic values, that courses should promote personal and ethical development, foster understanding of other people and counter discrimination. It goes without saying that this should characterise all teaching.

### **Sociodrama as an individual course**

("Individual choice", "Humanistic immersion")

However, it is no secret that many teachers struggle with curricula, which are often perceived as very extensive and demanding. As well as students putting grades above all else, which is not surprising given grade inflation and the levels universities' current admissions scores have reached. Students often admit that they are "studying for the grade", and that this erodes deeper knowledge. In the long run, the grade rush drains them of all energy. Very many teachers are also mentors and feel that they would need support and guidance to make the mentoring time valuable and not just a list of upcoming requirements.

A "Grow" course focusing on personal development through active methods (action methods, action exploration, Sociodrama, etc.) can fill many needs, offering practical knowledge, clear tools to meet needs such as self-awareness, group dynamics, democracy training, conflict management, which are difficult to meet during "normal" lessons. The course can be offered to different types of teachers, educators, counsellors, etc. and is flexible enough to be adapted to current needs and offered in different forms (Syllabus for local course "To grow: identity and relationships", 100 p., course objectives and grading. See Annex 1).

### **Sociodrama as a "To grow" course instead of Psychology 2b<sup>4</sup>**

The Psychology 2b course is intended as a continuation and a deepening of the first two psychology courses, covering the different psychological perspectives, mental health and

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<https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/laroplan-gy11-for-gymnasieskolan>

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<https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/gymnasieprogrammen/amne?url=1530314731%2Fsyllabuscw%2Fjsp%2Fsubject.htm%3FsubjectCode%3DPSK%26tos%3Dgy&sv.url=12.5dfce44715d35a5cdfa92a3>



illness, personality and developmental psychology, clinical psychology and the influence of media on human behaviour, emotions and thoughts. For some years now, both Psychology 1 and Psychology 2a require students to "relate to their own experiences". But they are only 50-credit courses and the time for self-reflection is really not much. Many students would like to continue with psychology education, and preferably on a much more practical and personal level. Being able to offer a course on practical personal development is a great opportunity both for students and for teachers. We are committed to the requirement that what we do should be based on scientific foundations and proven experience. It is therefore important to be able to link the course to scientific literature and current research, and to several branches of humanistic personality and developmental psychology. And also to provide students with experiential knowledge "for real", based on their specific needs. Students are so different! Some groups may need a lot of work on cultural and existential choices ("Can I marry who I want?") while in other groups bullying or total lack of motivation are themes that need a lot of work.

Theoretical knowledge from Psychology 1 and 2a about, for example, Bowlby's attachment theory, Maslow's needs ladder or Freud's defence mechanisms comes to a new, deeper level, to a learning "for real". Many examples of this are given in Chap. 5.

### **Sociodrama for Language Introduction**

The Swedish National Agency for Education's website highlights how upper secondary school students should be taught Swedish. They also refer to various reports. One of these "shows that only one in three pupils went on to a national upper secondary school programme three years after starting language introduction. There is a need to develop language introduction and how newcomers should be introduced to Swedish upper secondary education".

Language introduction is clearly not just about language skills, but is based on the assumption that language is the way into a society, a way of thinking and behaving, it carries with it values and unspoken assumptions that are not thought about, let alone taught, because they are taken for granted.

Sociodramatic exercises and other so-called Action Methods can be very useful in this context. If texts and concepts are "acted out in a dramatic form", where body language and unspoken values catch the eye, culture clashes are highlighted in a surprisingly clear way. Acting out the encounter with an immigration officer provides knowledge on many different levels: linguistically (WHAT should I say), emotionally (HOW should I say it) and behaviourally (what messages does my body language give?) It is not at all uncommon for kind and well-behaved young people to look down or away when talking to an adult, which is perceived as evasive and even impolite by agency staff and is interpreted as: What do you really want to hide from me?

Practising the meeting and switching roles with caseworkers provides unexpected perspectives. An example: in an improvised role as a possible caseworker, a young boy sat in a clear position of power with his feet on the table and a cigarette in his mouth. The applicant's role automatically became both submissive and aggressive. Gaining knowledge and experiencing a "Swedish" way of being a caseworker came as a much-needed shock: in front of a respectful, committed case worker, the applicant became hopeful, honest and

engaged. The practical implications of this work had life-changing consequences for the whole group of young people involved.

### **Sociodrama as a complement for mentoring time**

As a mentor, you sometimes find that there are classes with very poor group dynamics. It is not uncommon for the blame to fall on one or a few individuals. I once started in a new class that had had a different mentor before. She pointed out to me that X was a very turbulent person, creating conflicts all the time, throwing rude comments even during class time and generally being unpleasant. If you talked to the students, who in turn complained to the principal, all you got was that he was a completely impossible person.

A co-mentor and I started using what Moreno called sociometry (see ch. 7 on Moreno's theories) because we noticed that the discussions just ended up with more and more shit-throwing. Via an anonymous questionnaire, we investigated who would like to be with whom on ten or twelve different variables: with whom in class would you most like to study for the test / eat lunch / go to the movies / write a collaborative paper / take a walk during recess / watch a football game, etc.

As we went through the survey, we noticed that everyone had one or a few friends they wanted to do things with, but that the guy in question did NOT have a single choice. We didn't comment on the results and just took the students to an empty room for an extended mentoring period. We divided them into five randomly selected groups and asked them to show us a picture of what a good group might be.

What we saw when they showed the scenes to each other differed markedly from what they said: The "It's good to eat together"-group had pushed away (!) one participant because he couldn't fit at the table; the "We work together"-group showed some being lifted up in a pyramid by pushing two friends down to the floor. "We take care of each other" showed a scene where one friend was accidentally pushed by another and dropped a book: everyone around him picked up the book, comforted him... and roared wildly at the poor classmate who had accidentally pushed him. In each scene there was usually one, sometimes two people who got into real trouble. The students and we sat in slack-jawed silence and watched. We mentors only commented on the whole thing at the end very briefly, saying that apparently there was a perception in the class that the "we-feeling" or friendship always had to be built at someone else's expense. Was this reasonable?

The scenes spoke for themselves in such a clear way that everyone understood. We didn't comment, much less make accusations, we didn't blame anyone, we just let the scenes speak because we understood that the students had become aware of something they couldn't even imagine. We did not engage in discussions that would probably have resulted in excuses, accusations, criticism and empty talk. We sat quietly because we understood that the students had understood. The result was that we did not hear any more accusations against X who in turn had stopped throwing out inappropriate comments. The other mentor, who was a PE teacher, confirmed that the atmosphere in the class had changed markedly even during PE lessons, where group dynamics are often better attended to.

Zerka Moreno, J.L Moreno's wife and colleague whom we met often, used to say: "Trust the method!". In this case, it really was the method that created the whole change.

## Chapter 5

### The Sociodramatic Work

And suddenly you're faced with a class of students you care deeply about! You want so much for them to take better care of their health, to learn to respect each other, to become less influenced by social media and more mature as citizens of society. What do you do?

Working as a sociodramatist requires training and personal experience. Over time you develop a practical depth of knowledge, you become more intuitive, more open, simply more competent. It is a skill that develops throughout one's life. Many people liken our work to an art, like mastering an instrument, something you learn by watching others practice it, and practising, practising and practising. But just as a good violinist should be able to read music and bars and not just go by ear, we think it might be helpful to give an idea of the ingredients needed to work with sociodrama.

Of course, there is no recipe that can be followed blindly; it depends on the group, the environment, the mood of the participants and the sociodramatist, the purpose of the work, and many other factors. Sociodrama is a process, you know how you start but not how you will end, because it is a creative work that progresses in an organic way. Nevertheless, here are the most important guidelines and many examples to help you remember what you did during your sociodrama training and give you tips and inspiration.

Everything we do makes us all absolutely unique. And what we can give to others in the end is just who we are. If you follow our clues and use your own abilities, skills and resources as a teacher, parent, child, friend or whatever you are, you're sure to go a long way.

### Meeting: where and when

#### Where

The place where you meet can have an impact on your future sociodramatic work.

Moving to a room dedicated only to this new type of activity is a form of psychic warming up that gives a clear signal: we will work in a different way, expect something new!

If you are at school, it is all the more important to have a room without benches if possible - otherwise a room whose benches have been moved aside, as neatly as possible. Although it may sound ridiculous, the environment matters a lot. The habit of sitting in a circle is as old as man himself. Even if we miss the campfire, in a ring everyone is equal, there is no beginning and no end, no one can hide behind anyone's back and everyone can see everyone. A few years ago there was a drama room in our school, with soft carpet and big cushions. Guess it was appreciated by the students! Personally, I prefer chairs where you can sit with your back straight, which makes it easier to pay attention and concentrate.

When using sociodrama in the classroom, for example to explore a social theme in a particular subject or to find solutions to a conflict, it is all the more important to change the room if possible, to emphasise that this is NOT an ordinary lesson, here everyone is working together, all the time, there are no obvious predefined answers, no right-wrong mentality. Here we will do something different and we expect everyone's active participation. It is

important that there is room to move freely, to stand in long lines, to divide the group into smaller groups so that they do not disturb each other.

This healthy approach of "doing things differently" also influences the teachers and leaders. One teacher noticed how much easier it was for students to understand Plato's famous theory of the cave when he switched roles with the philosopher and then asked them to do the same. Half-asleep pupils suddenly woke up, if only because the teacher seemed to have gone a little nuts standing on the table talking as the philosopher would have done, in the first person. But Plato's theory stuck!

In other contexts, such as working in institutions or prisons, where participants come from different places and may not even know each other, it is all the more important to choose a neutral and safe place with as few distractions as possible. In refugee centres, the premises are different. This requires great flexibility from the leaders and participants, especially if they cannot be in the same room as when they started.

## Examples

Quite often, students react immediately when they enter a large room without benches, with the chairs prepared in a large ring. Someone said that "it feels a bit like an AA meeting" but this immediately creates both curiosity and a little anxiety. Nothing to hide behind, help!

That it creates anxiety is not only negative if you take the opportunity to devote the first meeting to expectations and fears (anonymous, different notes, only one thought per note). When the collected notes are then read, sorted and lined up on the floor according to different themes, pupils immediately see that they are practically never the only ones to have expressed a fear or a need. This creates an initial link between the participants. One student said: Even though I don't yet know WHO wrote the same thing I did, is as shy as I am, has as much trouble talking in groups as I do, worry about saying something stupid, or is as afraid as I am that others will laugh at me, I KNOW that I am far from alone in this". The teacher/sociodramatist who affirms all comments, acknowledges them as perfectly logical, and sets clear rules around mutual respect, lays the first foundations for joint work and good group dynamics. If you think that 20 pupils write five or six notes each, you understand the need for a large floor...

Moreover, everything you do in a room is eventually "in the walls" and it is very good to come back to the same room that is associated with a particular type of activity, a new way of working. It facilitates the work that runs through the whole process. "I am immediately happy when I enter our hall" is a not at all uncommon comment. And I can testify to some rather unsuccessful times when we were unexpectedly moved to other rooms and the work didn't come out the same, the pupils claiming that "it didn't feel right".

At Vårberg refugee camp we had access to a gymnasium that was large, bright and sunny. Our work started in January so it was great to have the large space and light.

When

We have had very different types of courses at school. The course "To grow" as Individual Choice is 100 hours and includes two sessions a week of two and a half hours each for one semester. It sounds a lot, but creating the conditions for deep work takes time and it's nice to have a broader framework for reflection work.

Courses for whole classes of 33 pupils, which require splitting the class into two parts with half the time each, have the advantage of saving a lot of time at the beginning because the pupils already know each other and have chosen each other when the group is split. This allows for more self-reflection and for writing Journals at home, which many pupils appreciate.

With newcomers learning Swedish, our sociodramatic work was integrated into Swedish language teaching and everything was based on our collaboration with the Swedish teacher. The sociodramas we made were often based on previous work in the class, which included oral parts, texts to read and our own production. The Swedish teacher has a lot of hours available and it was not difficult to find a few hours for our work. Often the themes were already ready when we met, the teacher and the students had come up with them together.

As we travelled around to different refugee centres, we always met new group compositions. This meant that each time we had to start by creating a group of participants, important that everyone understood the conditions of attendance, that everyone talked about themselves and their own experiences, no right or wrong, everything that was said stayed within the group we had at the moment. Sociodrama is based on talking about what happens outside of the gatherings themselves, but we made an addition where we explored what they think would stay in the group we were working with. Then the rule was that no one would tell anything that was sensitive and more personal outside the group. The refugee's life situation is full of uncertainty, so it becomes important to be careful when meeting the participants.

### **The importance of warm-ups**

If we are talking about young people in a school context, we must remember that students come to this group from other classes and/or go to other classes soon after, classes where the focus is on learning, analysis, production of results and, above all, grades. They are often asked to reproduce a theory, a model or a technique, and "good students" are often those with a good memory. Individualism, competition and panic about final grades are common phenomena in their everyday school life, along with a general assumption that success is life's primary goal. It is really important to find warm-ups that change students' attitudes when they come to this new experience

Moreno defines warm-ups as part of the necessary work that creates spontaneity and creativity in a group. They are physical and mental exercises for the group members, and for the leader himself. In his books, Moreno writes a lot about the relationship between spontaneity and creativity, both essential for achieving results in sociodramatic work. He defines warm-ups as "the operational expression of spontaneity", which means that warm-ups are the essential, viable and accessible tool to enable (in our case) the students' desire to engage, to see situations with new eyes and to find new solutions. In schools, there is a great need to warm up students to a new way of working, to a different kind of space, to each other, to get the body to act and change the mood from the previous school activities. The same process applies to Sociodrama as well as other action methods. Notice that warm-ups are much more than just walking around the room and smiling and meeting other people's eyes and greeting each other. Much more, but ... what?

Most students who choose this course tend to say that "they have no idea what the course is about, they just chose it because it sounds interesting" and expect a "normal course" in a class with benches in a row, students staring at someone else's neck and a teacher who - at best - teaches them something interesting and useful. Others have heard about the course through other students and they expect an "unusual and fun course where people make friends" - although they admit they don't understand how.

In ordinary school situations, in our experience, it is quite impossible to have any kind of sociodrama without deep work aimed at transforming the 'class' into a new kind of group that experiences a new openness and mutual trust. That is, creating a space and an atmosphere that helps them to rise from their chairs without fear of being judged or laughed at. It is not at all uncommon for some students in the same class to NEVER talk to some of the other students in the class, for three years!

So, what kind of warming up leads quickly and easily to a deeper sense of security and trust and more active group dynamics, qualities that are absolutely essential for group work? Without a relaxed, safe and playful atmosphere that creates trust in the other participants and in the leader, students become blocked, they refuse to talk. There are different types of warm-ups, and they are not the same for existing classes meeting in a new way (Psychology 2b) or for those who have chosen the course but do not know each other (Individual Choice), or for newcomers who sit together all day in a relatively small group, with few teachers, and take sociodrama as a fun change in the usual lesson flow. Appropriate warm-ups are even more important if the young people are in institutions or come via the Immigration Service and do not meet regularly.

### **Examples of Warm ups**

We always start the day's lesson with a round, where everyone says a few words about how they feel, how it is to meet today, etc. At the beginning everyone says "I feel fine" and that's enough, everyone has at least seen everyone, been seen by everyone, said something and broken the ice. You get a first glimpse of the mood of the group: sometimes everyone is very stressed because they have an exam the hour after, and then it's good to know that. As time goes by, the students become more relaxed, sometimes someone wants to share something special, that they just got their driving licence or that someone has passed away. This can change the direction of everything you had planned, but it is wise to follow the energy of the group.

There are many types of warm-ups, from "get-to-know-you" games to other exercises that evoke deep reactions. All kinds of sociometric exercises are welcome at the beginning of the course where students don't know each other: lining up alphabetically, by age or other variables is one way to get students off their chairs. For some, this is the most difficult step. Meeting and greeting each other and exchanging a few words in many different ways, like a five year old, an old professor, a ballet dancer, a cowboy, or an astronaut in space takes very little time and creates a lot of laughter. Even so-called "silly warm ups" (like making a gesture that the others mirror, or pretending to "throw" a sound - Mjaoooo! - to someone else in the group who will catch it) are often appreciated. They are perceived as silly, though, as one student put it: "At first I felt silly and annoyed, until I realised that it was a very good way for me to understand what the teacher meant, that in this course nothing is right, nothing is wrong. I'm always so controlled... It was a liberation". You can move on to more serious

variants, such as making an imaginary map on the floor and placing yourself in the place where you live, then where you were born, and giving the students the opportunity to say a few words about themselves. It's a way of getting to know each other a little better. If you then ask them to go to the place where their parents or grandparents were born, surprises are guaranteed and suddenly no one is "different" anymore. Many pupils begin to see each other with new eyes. In a recent survey we conducted, 44 out of 45 students indicated that warm-ups were necessary, and 70% of them thought that simple, unpretentious exercises were best at the beginning of the course. They say: "It's a way to see all the participants at once, to relate to them all quickly, even to those who don't talk much." "I wake up when we do something physical, both physically and mentally". "I feel part of the group". One girl wrote: "It's nice to do something so unpretentious, nice to feel that we don't have to perform, like we always have to do at school".

Many other exercises can be seen as warm-ups, in the sense that they awaken the students' desire to confront different issues. We claim that a picture is worth a thousand words. J.L. Moreno's famous expression "Don't tell me, show me!" is the key to his whole theory. There is a deep lesson in this: there is a difference when the body is involved, when you do something active. At the beginning of the course, we usually ask students in pairs to tell each other something, one minute each. They might be given the task of telling each other about a theme we have chosen, anything from taste in music, the way to school, about a pet, about a nice holiday, the themes are endless and they will think that the point of the exercise is to get to know each other. You then start again and change the theme, but the second time the listener has to play totally uninterested, look away, check his or her nails, do his/her hair etc for a minute, then they change roles. In the next task with a new theme, you ask them, one at a time, to do the opposite: play super-interested, sit much closer, open their eyes, lean forward, acknowledge coolly, be enthusiastic. It feels a bit silly and there's guaranteed to be lots of laughter. Then, in a feedback circle, it always turns out that the students have felt blocked when they were ignored, lost the desire to tell, got annoyed when someone got too close, felt anger and discomfort. More is not needed to make the students understand the main ingredient in all this: the exercise and the roles were made up, they knew very well that the peer was pretending, but the feelings that followed were real. That is to say: if we act in situations, portray them, show them instead of just talking about them, the result is completely different. And the goal is to understand oneself, not just the others.

Another example: we often have classes, divided into smaller groups of 5-6 students, presenting a picture of what they think is a good group. Why not just ask the class? If you ASK the class in smaller groups what they THINK, many students will not say a word, either because they don't dare, or because they think they lack intelligent answers, or simply because they don't care. And you will get the answers that everyone expects: you should be respectful, listen to everyone etc etc. Things that everyone knows - theoretically - since kindergarten. You can only agree and hope that it will show in real work. What happens, however, if you ask the groups to form an active image, a sculpture of what a good group looks like? One group wanted to show that everyone is equal and should support each other: they stood in a circle and held each other by the shoulders. They said the same thing they would have said in class. Everyone was there, which is a good thing, but the difference was that one girl's body was completely turned outwards, she was holding her classmates by the shoulders and smiling, but her feet were pointing outwards, she really looked like half her

body wanted to escape. Obviously, you can't give your own interpretations. But we simply asked the girl : "If your feet were to talk, what would they say?". She looked down and told us: "Sure, I agreed with the rest of the group, but once we were in a circle, I felt blocked, imprisoned, so much so that I lost my breath, without understanding why" .... "Now that you ask, I know it's the same feeling I get at home, I have to be loyal and obedient but I'm suffocating". The conversation that followed took the group to a much deeper level, the girl was praised for her honesty, many shared her feelings, she felt accepted like never before and we had the opportunity for further work during the course on family relationships, control needs and much more.

The groups are very different and the variations enormous. Most of the students are engaged, open, welcoming and have the opportunity to get to know themselves and each other better. Most images of a good group are positive, but it also happens that "We help those who have difficulties", a generous thought, shows instead an image where some are in a very clear position of power. Or the expression "A good group has the same goal" shows an image where some achieve the goal at the expense of others. The feeling is that we are working with reality, not with fancy theories, and students say they appreciate what we do because it "feels real".

When we were out working with newcomers, we often used the same learn-to-know-other exercises that they do in school. However, in Vårberg, where we had a large gymnasium and the group had almost 40 participants, we did something different! We called it "the whole sea storms". Everyone had a chair and they had to move from one side to the opposite side of the room without putting their feet on the ground. We barely had time to give the instruction before a little boy with a firm grip on his chair jumped straight across the floor! Everyone was very surprised at how it was done, many tried and some more succeeded but most remained on the starting side. A few toppled over in the middle of the floor and it was generally messy. We asked them to look around and see the results. Then to go back to the start side where they were split into three groups. Their task was to organise themselves so that everyone got over to the other side. Eventually they arranged a line where they sent one chair at a time to the front and everyone got across happily. They were very proud and we talked about how important it was to take care of each other! The atmosphere changed completely, the tougher boys were considerate of younger peers, the girls gained a whole new respect and new role in the game, as everyone sent the chairs down the line so that everyone could get through together. They forgot that they had seen it as a competition! Now it was just fun to help each other over to the other side.

Obviously, the first way the game was conducted reflected the experience of many newcomers. It's all about getting by, at all costs, and thinking on your feet. Now they understood - in action - that it could be done in a completely different way.

### **Choosing a theme, that is: "What are we going to do today"?**

First, some examples from our high school experience. Socrates was right when he said "Know thyself" over 2000 years ago: a striking majority of high school students who are asked to choose a goal for the course respond "I want to know myself better". And only in second place comes "I want to understand my fellow human beings better". It is often noted



that society is becoming more and more individualistic and one wonders if this is a way for students to turn their eyes away from important social issues, to become even more self-centred.

Gävle University philosophy professor Jari Ristiniemi gave us an important clue during a videoconference, when he pointed out the difference between Individualism (every person is an island, everyone just takes care of themselves) and Individuality (the desire to find oneself, to become aware of oneself, one's thoughts and feelings). This confirms our 20 years of work with young people: wanting to work to know oneself is NOT a selfish act, not something to be discouraged, not something that will create a society full of self-centred narcissists. On the contrary.

Our young people, bombarded by the media that squeezes them into fixed roles and false images, both of others and themselves, are thirsting to turn their gaze inwards and hear, for once, that they can sit down and think about themselves without being labelled as egotistical. And they try to ask themselves: Who am I, really? Not the image I want to present of myself on Instagram, not what my parents want, not what my classmates think. What I am, my identity, what I am when I am true to myself.

Given just a little time and space to really ask themselves this question, they quickly and almost automatically become more open to others, those others they so desperately need (not for nothing is the course in high school called "To grow: identity and relationships").

In our experience, giving all these young people in their late teens permission to look inwards has a strong impact on the composition of the group, in all contexts, as soon as someone starts to open up and become a little more personal, the atmosphere becomes warm, empathetic, permissive. Those who have "dared" are told that they are brave and everyone becomes more generous with compliments. If we work on self-image by having them write two lists of positive and negative qualities, it is clear that the vast majority of pupils write a secret "negative list" which is at least twice as long as the positive one. We have often noticed how frighteningly low the feeling of being valuable for who you are is, especially for tough guys, hidden under a strong performance anxiety (at school, in society and on social media). Moreover, many students - not just immigrant students! - have a very limited vocabulary to describe feelings, which corresponds to a limited awareness of them: the lists start with "I'm nice", "caring", maybe "smart" but then it ends. The negative lists are much longer and more nuanced. Does this correspond to society's often very critical climate?

Turning the theme into "action" - as we have seen - is what leads to results. It can be as simple as having two students stand back to back with each other, have one bring up a negative characteristic, such as "I'm slow" and have them turn around and see the flip side of the characteristic: the student very soon arrives at "But I'm meticulous!". This is a good way to get permission to say out loud a positive characteristic without bragging, which is an absolute taboo.

Presenting one's safe place in an illustrated form is another example of a simple exercise where young people can put themselves at the centre, dare to show some more personal aspects and think about what really makes one safe in real life. It is also a good way to teach them how to set up a scene, to put others in the role and to change roles. Some students, mostly the boys, create scenes where they sit in nature, in a park, a forest clearing, on a rock and feel they have no demands (Note: demands are one of the most common themes students wish for at the beginning of the process. At one point, a group lined up 38 chairs on

the floor, corresponding to the different demands they felt. Can you feel good with THIRTY-EIGHT different demands? AT THE SAME TIME?). Many others present pictures with very few, beloved people. Some classics for the girls: 'Mummy and I sitting on the sofa watching TV' or 'My best friend and I in my room'.

In the eyes of the students, showing these non-committal images is still quite "harmless". If the tasks are more demanding or personal than that, it becomes threatening. However, this does not mean that the images are unimportant: they can be very powerful and evoke many emotions, especially if they "step out of the picture and see the scene from the outside, with new eyes", which is called Mirroring. Comments like "I never thought that my mother (sister, brother, father) is so important in my life", "I should go to the park by myself much more often" are very common. Seeing other people's scenes is also very evocative: "When I see your scene with your best friend, I understand why I was so devastated when my friend disappeared from my life". Whole life stories are evoked and intertwined.

Or they can go even deeper: a girl once showed a picture of her safe place at home in the kitchen around the dining table, with her mother, father and two siblings. At the comment "How nice you used to be", the girl was very touched, tears welled up in her eyes and told us that this never happened anymore, after her parents' divorce. The same could have happened if the family had to flee, to split up due to war or other circumstances. Such a simple scene led to very many deep and personal reflections, for some a new awareness, which is what these young people are thirsting for. A new theme emerged for the group: family relationships.

In groups of newcomers studying Swedish, the needs and therefore the themes may differ. There we often focused on more pressing needs to understand and meet the new society in the best possible way. The sociodramatic work on the relationship "between me and the new society" has proved to be valuable, both on a practical and emotional level. Working with emotions and with hopes has also been very rewarding. For this, see two detailed examples in chapter 6!

### **Who decides?**

We have often wondered whether we should always let students choose the theme or whether we leaders should suggest them. However, in our twenty years of experience, we have noticed that at the beginning of the course there are certain themes that always recur when students are asked: self-image, self-esteem, safety, relationships in the family, demands, achievement, loneliness, my roles at home and in society. For example, working on a more social theme, such as democracy, if students are not comfortable with each other and have not gotten to know each other more personally, it can lead to a more superficial piece of work, full of politically correct answers and very empty words. It will not be rooted in their real experience and will thus be another in a series of failed attempts by the school in this direction. We have many examples of important work on, for example, democracy or bullying, when the group has had time to create more, hopefully more genuine, and certainly more respectful relationships.

Moreover, the groups are often very different: in some of them, the relationship with the family, its demands, its expectations, not infrequently its culture of honour, are central themes that need to be addressed again and again. In other groups, these themes are completely

unimportant; it is future plans, career, crippling internal demands that count. What matters is working with the group's own personal needs: in a group where someone has been bullied in the past, sociodrama about bullying will be 'real stuff' for everyone and touch on completely different levels both emotionally and cognitively.

Why is "who chooses the theme" an important aspect? Back to point two: students often come to our classes from completely different contexts, need to land in a different atmosphere and get into a different kind of work. We need an Opening Round, so that everyone sees everyone, and everyone says a few words. And they need warm-ups that wake them up to work actively, with their bodies. If you plan a warm-up exercise of being in pairs, where in turn one closes his eyes and the other leads the peer, the following work will almost automatically be about trust because this is what has been awakened by the warm-up.

Sometimes it is the Opening Round that creates the theme: if it turns out that someone has just lost a beloved grandmother and many relate to that grief, there is no point in sticking to one's plans to work on the theme of Integration. If you have been working with so-called "social atoms" and a pupil has brought into the picture old primary school friends who bullied him, the whole group is automatically drawn to the theme of bullying, because it is these feelings that have been aroused. Speaking of which, below is the story of such work "in action".

### **Action!**

The essence of sociodrama is precisely the possibility to study different situations, different themes or different concepts not by talking about them but by acting them out. Showing a situation concretely in its different aspects and elements and living into them, opens our eyes and leads to insights and broader understanding. Moreover, the different techniques offered by Sociodrama give each participant the opportunity to exchange his/her own position, his/her own point of view with other positions, and gain new, often unexpected perspectives. If a picture is "worth a thousand words", we show the situations instead of telling about them. One exercise we often do is called Social Atom. We usually draw one on a large piece of paper: in the middle I write my name and around me I write the people who matter most, who influence or have influenced me the most, simply those who I find spinning around me in my world. Animals and things are also welcome. Then we take the picture into action, the person in question takes a companion in the role of himself or herself, places him or her in the middle of the floor and then fills in the most important others. All the others, whether they are just a few or whether one is in the middle of huge circles. In addition, you can switch positions - switch roles - with some of them and see yourself from the outside. This seemingly innocent role reversal often has significant consequences. In role reversals, a person in the role of his critical father can capture a deep sense of warmth and have a different image of himself in his eyes.

Some examples: a young man, hitherto rather reserved and a bit peculiar, has drawn a very comprehensive Social Atom, which he would like to take a closer look at. He is an only child but has a lot of friends around a hobby that gives him joy, energy and meaning. He takes up his parents first, and in their role he sees himself: his father praises him for being brave and

strong, his mother affirms love and support. He would like to bring on stage more peers, who think he is funny and a good person. However, on the Social Atom's paper, he also draws a group of people far away in one corner. When asked if he wants to include them too, he rather vehemently replies "No!!! They're not important!!! Not anymore!" That makes me suspicious right away. He feels the group is trustworthy and has just shared positive comments about him, so he agrees to bring them up on stage. It turns out that an entire class has been bullying him during the 4 - 5 years of middle school. He notes that he never talked to anyone in class about it, even though he's in third grade! Only his mentor knows about this. He told her at the beginning of Year 1 that he started secondary school with many expectations of a new beginning, after years of pure hell. The attention of the rest of the class is raised to the max. We don't bring in people to represent the bullies, just a chair. He gets the opportunity now to tell them (the chair) everything that has been on his mind for years, all the pain they have caused him, how deeply they have hurt and wounded him. A lot of anger finally gets words. Many words. The class stands around and backs him up. At the comment "Good! Now you actually get to throw all this away" he asks beaming, "CAN I REALLY throw the chair away?". Yes..., I reply cautiously, having calculated with lightning speed that the chair's possible trajectory would not break a mirror on the other side of the hall. Then he throws the chair with a force no one would believe him capable of. He is very verbal and tells the class a little later that he "hasn't felt so happy and so relieved in ages". In the final written report a few months later, he assesses the scene as "a historic change in his life". This could never have happened if we had not portrayed the social atom on stage.

These scenes obviously have a deeper impact on the other students as well, and much time may be devoted to dialogues, in pairs, in small groups and in large groups. It turned out that one of the students had experienced the opposite situation: the pupil and a large part of his class had bullied a girl who had later committed suicide. The pupil in question had NEVER spoken to anyone else about this. He told the class that "a huge stone had fallen from his heart and that only now, eight years later, could he try to come to terms with the event". We later had several sociodramas on the theme of bullying: all the pupils in the group had to spontaneously take the possible roles around such situations, in order to explore the whole picture. Many roles emerged: classmates, teachers and school management, families, not least the bullies, neighbours, friends, even the role of "Instagram" who felt powerful and blamed everyone else ("I'm neutral, it's you who use me in the wrong way!", said the pupil in that role). Students in these positions were asked to say what they thought and felt in that role, questioning and accusing each other, and then trying other positions to see if their opinions changed or if they got possible answers. Situations are always multifaceted and seeing and putting into words the myriad elements that make up reality often proves to lead to better understanding and unexpected insights. It is important to give young people plenty of time for dialogue, reflection and their own experiences after each Sociodrama.

We have worked in this way on many themes: friendship and love, integration, LGBTQ issues, God and faith, always after a warm-up and when the group felt comfortable with the way of working.

Sociodrama has a big "toolbox". The most common ones are perhaps the role reversal (I change roles with my mother, I "become" my mother and she becomes me) or the position reversal (I as the principal change position with the parents). But there are many ways to

work: you can interrupt (Freeze) the dialogues and reflect on what is happening, or you can Mirror the situations and see them from the outside, from a distance. You can freeze a role and let the person "think out loud, say everything she can think of" (Soliloquy). These are quite simple ways to gain perspective and not to lose control of the game, if you are a bit new. Once we were working on the theme of Conflict and two good friends showed in action one's problems with a boyfriend who, we learned at the time, treated her very badly. The friend had been trying for months to convince her to leave him, without success. ("Yes, but he's also..."). We brought in another girl in her place and the scene was replayed, so that she could see it for herself, standing outside. Then she immediately exclaimed, "But he's crazy, he can't treat HER like that!". The friend in tears screamed: "Hey, don't you understand anything? That's YOU!" It didn't take much more for her to open her eyes to what the situation really was, the situation she had refused to accept before. She came to class the next day and told the group that she had left him and that "it wasn't as hard as she had thought". The class cheered!

### **An example: sociodrama about migrants**

I worked on the theme of Migration with a class that had requested it (Individual Choice). I followed the template of a sociodrama that Zerka Moreno had done in Stockholm about the Holocaust and simply divided the class of twenty students into two parts, half migrants, half Swedes. But how? Zerka had just split a huge group in two. I wanted to avoid friends who always sit next to each other ending up in the same group.

I had twenty small stones of two different colours in a cloth bag and asked everyone to pick a stone: those with white stones were to be migrants and those with beige ones were to be Swedes. In the sub-groups, everyone chose their roles: in one there were families with children, unaccompanied minors, older couples, some friends and even a smuggler. In the other, ordinary Swedish families, two managers of a construction company, someone from the social services, young people, couples who already lived where the migrants came to live. I asked them to improvise a scene.

It didn't take more than a few seconds before a border (of chairs) had divided the large hall in two. No one had understood how this had happened, the border had sort of risen out of the ground by itself. The students apparently wanted to go to the first meeting soon after arriving? Mark the difference between us and them? I interviewed them in the roles and they gave voice to hopes and fears. They settled into the roles quickly. Families who had survived the journey were trying to reach relatives in Sweden, Social Services wanted to send them to different places, young boys were trying to get jobs in the informal market. Young Swedish entrepreneurs were trying to exploit them for the informal market, possible neighbours did not want to hear about them and the students who had chosen the role of young children felt confused and became completely dumbfounded. There was an argument between some who thought the smuggler was a hero who had saved their lives and those who thought he was a criminal. We froze the scene and shared the thoughts that the roles had evoked and then switched positions. The migrants became Swedes and vice versa to change perspectives and hopefully find a deeper understanding by seeing it all from different angles.

One thing surprised us all in a sociodrama where a large majority of the participants had moved to Sweden themselves, some as children, others only four or five years earlier or

were immigrant children. All those who had been cast in the role of "Swede" had reacted aggressively, with totally dismissive attitudes. They claimed it was what they had experienced or what their parents had told them. It took a long time for everyone to portray thoughts and feelings, testify to difficult events and confront prejudices, which were present from both sides. When participants have been in difficult positions, it is important to derole them, i.e. to make sure that everyone is themselves again and is not left in the role of "lonely child", "bad employer" or "powerless social worker". Of course, we had not solved the problem of "migration", but undeniably we had all gained new perspectives and gotten to know each other better, which created more understanding and empathy between the group participants.

Please also see chapter 6 for two detailed stories on how to use Sociodrama to good effect when working with newcomers, in schools and also in other institutions.

### **Sharing: sharing experiences**

Sociodramatists in Sweden usually use the English word 'Sharing' for the section of the work that involves the group participants sharing their experiences and thoughts after the sociodrama. As a foreign-born language teacher, I naturally wonder why the Swedish language lacks a word to denote this. Within the possible terms in Swedish, the term "delning"(Sharing) is reminiscent of a dying person's will. Sharing as "open your heart" sounds extremely silly to teenagers. Last Round? Sounds deadly! Sharing sounds like the Swedish term "kärning" that means bitching and the students have a good laugh about it. The more vague the concept, the more appreciated the content. "We need our bitch, now!" means, translated into adult English: time to sit down and hear what our peers thought of what we did. Or: "I wonder if they noticed how touched I was, hope I dare to tell them", and so on. Often much more.

Sharing has precise rules, which young people almost always respect for their own sake and for the sake of others. Rule number one is that you can talk for yourself, how you may have experienced being in a role, what this has brought up for you, what thoughts the work has given, what insights you have come up with and you must not interpret, comment on other people's opinions, criticise or give advice.

The students very quickly understand the point of this, they stick to it and are often extremely good at it. It's easier to start by telling them what it was like to take on a particular role. Sometimes even such a small thing can be important. We try to use the specific terminology as much as possible. This is important, because this small strategy can start to create a little distance from the highly emotional thing you may have just gone through and lead the group towards a more cognitive processing and anchoring of the practical work. But this is only if it doesn't block the flow of spontaneity. "When I WAS your grandmother, I was so moved..." is preferable to a dry "I got three roles : this one, that one and that one".

If one or more people have been very much in the spotlight, bringing up personal experiences, concerns or feelings and wanting to open up slightly more intimate aspects,

sharing is an essential part of the work. In sharing, the person sits quietly and listens to what the participants may have experienced during the work, in roles or as bystanders. Very often the participants recognise themselves in the work of the protagonist and they share similar experiences. It is good for the protagonist not to feel alone with his problems but to "get back" something of what he generously offered. Often, participants are very grateful that someone has dared to raise some personal aspects and show genuine appreciation to him or her. Courageous and generous are recurring terms. Some may tell how they have personally found a solution or matured further, which gives hope to the other participants. Most use the versatility of sociodrama to gain other points of view, broaden their horizons, understand the positions of others and become more empathetic and open.

Telling how you experienced a role is important for all participants, it puts into words a feeling that may have been difficult to define. The young people have an intuition that exceeds all expectations. Often the experience of being chosen for a role is more important than presenting one's own situation. Students find that they are often chosen for exactly the role they can understand and empathise with, even if the peer had no idea. Sometimes pupils are given the roles that make them feel good or that they need to be able to try out, and this only becomes apparent during sharing.

One girl told us in a recent sharing that it had felt a little difficult at first to be chosen for the role of an unpleasant peer, one who had let down the bond of friendship. She had accepted, even though she knew very well that she could have said no to the role, it is a clear rule we have. Then, she continued, she remembered "a similar situation of fiery betrayal she herself had experienced, the disappointment and the pain and the anger she had felt at the betraying friend". In the opposite role, she said, she understood very strongly "how much the unpleasant girl must really have been ashamed, how embarrassing her situation had been and what a guilty conscience you actually feel when you do something like that, even if you don't show it". She said that it had been easier to move on, felt that the scene that had been played "had given her a bit of revenge" and thanked whoever had chosen her for the role. She had been enriched by the experience.

We have been able to experience how sharing can change a person's life. We will never forget a guy's tears during such a deep and warm sharing. He had shown how he had participated in abusive treatment of a peer classmate when he was in middle school and years later truly understood the breadth of consequences that young people's unthinking actions can have. When he told him how much he thought this would negatively affect his entire life, one person commented, "No! Not at all! Imagine what a good father you will be, now that you understand all this!". He said in the final report that this spontaneous comment "had been a milestone in his life".

It is clear that all these young people have an enormous need to share real experiences. Those who cannot or do not dare to be more personal "in action", usually do so during sharing by telling how much and in what way they recognise themselves in the work of others or in different parts of a sociodramatic presentation. In a sense, everyone is working "for each other".

In conclusion, we could say that sharing is the part of the sociodramatic process that, perhaps more than all the others, shows how human beings have a built-in ability to

automatically relate to others. And this is even more evident and effective if the group participants make an effort to make their experiences conscious, express them out loud and share them with others. In a way, the effect increases exponentially. One can experience how obvious it is that we humans grow in relation to, or even just in the presence of, others.

### **Integrating knowledge cognitively: the Journal**

At the beginning of our experience in schools in the late '90s, and with a view to grading, the need arose to collect as much, as clear and as continuous written material as possible, in the form of a logbook/journal. Some pupils are more talkative than others, and are happy to share their thoughts and inputs, but this does not mean that more taciturn pupils are not very active in the group's theme and in their own development, and this must be able to have a positive impact on the grade.

It became clear very quickly that the task of writing down, after each session, what we had done and what it had raised, was much more than just a basis for the grade. Many pupils are good writers and can both explain and analyse, and for them it was not difficult to understand what they should write in the Journal. Others wondered what they had to write in the Journal, they misunderstood the task, which was meant to be an account/analysis of the work, and perhaps some thought that we were requiring a kind of intimate diary, which was certainly not the case.

In order to keep things as factual as possible, we suggested a "template" that they could follow, at least in the beginning, which included this:

- What was the theme of the lesson?
- What was/were the warm up/warm ups? What did they lead to? Anything in particular you would like to address in terms of content, your roles, group dynamics, etc.?
- What did we do afterwards? Use the right terms!
- How did you contribute to the collective work? Did you come up with anything new? Was there anything that concerned you?
- How was the sharing? The group dynamics?
- Anything else you would like to raise that might be of interest?

Not unexpectedly, at the beginning of each process, we get reports that range from half a page to seven or eight handwritten pages. We try via comments in the margins of the text to encourage the parts that are ok ("Good!!", "More of this next time!", "Interesting observation!" or "Good that you use the right terminology, keep it up!") and to clarify the task and grade requirements (For example: "What role did you get in the design? What was it like to play that particular role? Is there anything you came up with when you presented your Safe Place?"). And eventually most logbooks become good material.

At the beginning of our sessions, we NEVER restrict the students who wish to tell us in detail everything they had done or experienced, even if it meant a lot of correction work after each session. When we started to do this, we discovered a tremendous need in many students to get down everything they had experienced, thought, and conclusions, because they felt it was a way of understanding themselves and remembering. And more: we discovered that it



was precisely when they went back to think and report that the penny dropped in for many of them. Many wrote "Now that I think back to what we did, I notice that..." or "After working on X's Social Atom, when I got home, I noticed that even my brother... And now that I'm about to write, I understand that he..."

In doing so, it quickly became clear to us that the logbook, which we thought was a "must" for writing fair grades, was in fact a powerful instrument for achieving the deep, genuine goal we had desired. It was then that the practical work 'in action' and the experiences the students had were validated, embedded at a more cognitive level and turned into knowledge. The young people were also able to reread their texts and thus also monitor their own progress along the way and notice that they were indeed making progress. Around the end of our sessions, everyone writes a "Final Report" summarising what they have learned, and this is often where the young people themselves notice that they have changed and matured. One boy wrote: "I found it quite difficult to write the Journal but everything we did I found good and interesting and I got many good ideas. (...) It felt calm. Only now, in retrospect, I notice that I NEVER felt the need to play tough (macho) in the group, as I always did. I didn't have to appear as something I'm not, it was so very chill. It's a much better way of being that I've learned". We thought this was an example of what we are looking for: a "valuable learning".

The requirement to use the correct terminology was introduced from the very beginning to give the course more weight, we were afraid that the young people would think we were "just having fun" instead of using serious and accepted methods. It was also easier to understand each other when we talked about what we had done later in our meetings.

We teachers usually write a document that we fill in after each session called "What did we do?". It helps everyone remember what exercises we had and what the techniques are called. This makes it easier for the students' own reflections. In addition, over time these notes create awareness of the group's "own history". We encourage students to write the Journal on the same day.

In "What did we do?", you can read for example:

Date xxx, Log no.7

- Round, reflections from last time
- Warm-up 1: quick improvisations in two groups
- Warm-up 2: "If we were a garden..." (improvised roles)
- Warm-up 2 led to the theme "Unreasonable demands" which we worked on in sociodramatic form (Stage, Role reversal, Soliloquy)
- Long Sharing

Many students during our courses in school tell us that it is very helpful to start by describing what we did, to stay on the factual side. Once they start writing, more introspective work becomes much easier. We have deliberately had to make concessions, at least in part, to a requirement from the Swedish National Agency for Education that a focus on and development of written Swedish should permeate all school subjects. We have noticed how blocked many young people are, they categorically claim "I can't write". When we promised that we would ignore how they wrote and just think about the content, most of them got unstuck and it became easier and easier. Their unchallenged self-image of "non-writers" was

softened, which also had a positive effect on other subjects as well. Some began to enjoy being able to talk about themselves when they felt total acceptance from us.

For newcomers, who still find it difficult to express themselves in writing, we put more emphasis on the oral part of sharing. The Swedish teacher has worked a lot on our joint work, both before and after our sociodramas. For them, sociodrama is a way to better understand society and themselves, it is part of Swedish language teaching and they do not get a specific grade. Working with sociodrama with newcomers is wonderfully rewarding!

The Journals were a goldmine at all levels. We could read, often in fifteen or twenty different versions, how the same work had been experienced by different people. We were able to pay attention to the details of their work-in-action that we would never have been able to capture, when sitting in such a large group. In logbooks, we notice that a small word of encouragement can have consequences. Things we barely notice turn out to be important.

I remember a sociodrama we had about a social case that had received a lot of media attention: a guy had been kicked to death by a group of friends after a trivial discussion about a girl friend, a discussion that had gotten out of hand. The young people found the theme heavy and captivating, as we, in different positions on stage, had picked up all the people involved and the whole society around, from the families and friends, to the school, the journalists, the social services, the judges. The young people were trying to understand how a society can produce such an act, and many were thinking: It could have happened to me! Even if you give the floor to as many people as possible, a lot remains unsaid and this is what comes up in the logbooks! But something else happened, too, a little unusual.

The atmosphere was engaged and tense to the max as I noticed two girls sitting by themselves, talking and giggling. I noticed some annoyance and was about to join them, when I suddenly remembered that one of the girls had recently lost a very close relative and had suffered greatly as a result. I called out her name and she jumped. I then realised that, when something serious happens, there are people who MUST shield themselves and "not hear" because they are in the midst of a difficult process that they must deal with, and no one can judge them. And we just continued with our staging and they kept their cool. Sociodrama must surely reflect the WHOLE society around an event and many levels exist simultaneously, even those who "seem to ignore". I would like to give an example here of how a person in a Journal can reveal that something so imperceptible turned out to be something very important to her. The girl wrote that "she had really jumped when I had said her name, she was quite sure that I would scold her properly, and in front of everyone: how can you stand and laugh when the others are talking about life and death! She said she had "experienced this often over the last few weeks, she had been embarrassed because she couldn't be bothered to get involved in anything. She then realised that she had to turn off the whole sociodrama, saying that she "hadn't heard a word of it" - and that at the same time she "had been part of it by just being herself". The miraculous quality of sociodrama, where you get it right even when you think you're doing it wrong! She understood "in action" that she had the right to be as she was, life was too heavy for her and she could not bear one more thought of death and misery. She said that "she wanted to write about this, she would never have dared to tell me, but that the Journal had given her the opportunity to think back and capture what had happened", something that would have just been lost otherwise.

Reading the Journals can be an ordeal, quite time consumptive , but the stories you read are worth the effort a thousand times over. Through the Journals we understand what the work led up to, where we have the group, what is important or not. Often we understand where the group is going, what the themes are, what the doubts are, what the concerns are. Then we can adjust the next time's warm-ups in a direction that can be useful. Above all, it gives the opportunity to those who do not like to talk in the group to express themselves honestly, to rethink and find their own solutions.

Shy and withdrawn students who are not very visible in the group can do a lot of work inside, and they testify to this in the logbook. Very clear grading criteria (see Appendix 2) help us to answer the question: "What?? Did she get a B? but she hasn't been nearly as active as me!" We can then refer, without revealing its content, to the analytical power of the logbook, to all the work on our own self-awareness and to all the changes "in real life" that we have witnessed through the logbook.

## Chapter 6

### **Two stories of complete work, from warming up, through action, to sharing.**

In order to give a better picture of how sociodrama can be used, and after presenting examples of the individual moments, we will now give examples of two complete works on a specific theme with a specific group, the first with a group of unaccompanied minors in an institution in Alvesta and the second with a class of new arrivals at a secondary school in a Swedish suburb.

#### **1 The Alvesta Group**

The start of our assignment was to travel to Alvesta, a small town in Småland, which is the place in Sweden that had the first refugee settlement. It is now stationed in a high-rise building with apartments, where asylum-seeking families can live together while young people who have come alone share an apartment.

The young people had just been given a room for their meeting activities and the leisure leader Kerstin Lindblom worked, with the help of the group, to get it ready. The fact that they had to start from scratch and nothing was ready was both an advantage and a burden. The room became their own in a completely different way, when they themselves had been involved in collecting second-hand furniture and other equipment that was needed. Signs and decorations were painted, musical instruments were borrowed, and a mess emerged with the emphasis on function.

Some young people had been in Sweden for over two years, waiting for the opportunity to come to another place for study and accommodation. Those with good language skills translated for those who needed it. This meant that every part of the conversation had to be translated into 4-5 other languages, so everything went slowly.

#### **Warm ups**

We started with games that made us learn everyone's name, and physically move around the room. We talked about Moreno and his work with refugees during World War I. How women, children and old people living in Mitterdorf, Austria, managed to regain the zest for life by realising that they all had something important to contribute. We made a timeline where one point was those who had never been allowed to go to school up to those who had been in school for 15 years. We talked about the importance of mentoring each other and that those who were educated could take on the role of teacher for those who could not read and write. The conditions were different - some who were judged to be over 18 were not allowed to go to school in Sweden, they had to wait for permits which sometimes took an unreasonably long time. They were then under-stimulated. Now they had the opportunity to learn from those who had an education when they arrived, everyone found new roles.

## **Action!**

Theme: meeting with the officer at the Migration Agency

The first action we did in the group was about how to cope with the meeting with the officer at the Migration Agency. Everyone had to change roles with their caseworker and were helped to formulate something that they needed to express. At the first meeting with the group, we had a rather unclear picture of what the directives were at the Migration Agency. This also applied centrally, the guidelines were not yet formulated. With joint efforts, we tried to piece together a picture of what guided the caseworker's work.

## **Sharing**

When the gestures were finished and everyone had struggled with their questions, we sat down again in a circle to reflect on what we had learned. It turned out that a caseworker with whom someone had no contact at all could be seen by another asylum seeker as very kind and helpful.

In the meeting with the Migration Agency, the asylum seeker has to state the reasons that may entitle him to a residence permit. Telling them about their experiences and knowing that what I say can be used as an excuse for a rejection decision creates a very difficult situation. If you are sufficiently traumatised, you don't want to remember what could be a reason for obtaining a residence permit. If, moreover, you have come to Sweden with the help of smugglers, you have been given strict orders with the threat of what you are not allowed to tell.

We ended the first time by setting a time for the next meeting and asked the group to try to fit the times, as our train times dictated how long we could stay. We had a good discussion about how difficult it was with time constraints, when one day is the same as the next and there is no schedule to stick to. We also got to talk about different cultures' approaches to time and how extremely clock-driven time is in Sweden.

## **New meeting in Alvesta**

The group was in place when we arrived and some new participants were present. Those who had participated in the first meeting told us that, thanks to the change of role with the case manager, they had not been as afraid of the meeting and therefore the conversation had gone more smoothly and they felt more understood and less suspicious. The atmosphere was much lighter. Now they knew a bit more about what we were going to do. We did different ways of greeting each other. Who do you hold hands with? Who do you hug? Who do you look straight in the eye? What is polite in different countries? It was playful and lively, which was good because this time we were working on conflict management.

We sat in a circle and they had to think about who in their world was a good counsellor. They had to work in pairs and tell each other who they had come up with. Then they did a role reversal where in the role of counsellor they could say something about what was important right now. Everyone worked in parallel and we went around and helped them. There was

some language confusion but they had all paired up with someone who spoke their language so with a little help it went well.

Doing a role change with someone you appreciate is beneficial, then when they are back in the role as themselves and they hear what they themselves have said it becomes quiet. It seemed that this was perfect to reduce the stress of these young people who had been on such a tense journey.

In the next exercise they were to think of someone they had an unfinished 'affair' with. They could call this person X. A peer is given the role of X and sits and listens. With the help of us leaders, they have to express what is at the heart of the problem. When it is formulated, they switch roles with X and hear what the problem is. They then respond in the role of X. How does it all look from X's side? There are many 'aha' experiences. Misunderstandings are discovered and the vast majority of conflicts find a solution. When you work with gestures, it becomes real and settles in the body. That's why it's important to come up with a solution that feels good.

Those who still had an unresolved issue were assigned a mentor, chosen by the group. They were given the task of looking for solutions and then telling us next time. All so that they would not be left alone with unresolved conflicts.

We were a group of 14 participants. When everyone had worked, we shared and there was a thoughtful atmosphere in the room. Is this how it is done in Sweden? Is that why we don't get involved in wars? There were many thoughts about how to create a society that is just and peaceful.

### **What would Gandhi have done?**

For the last meetings in Alvesta, the leisure leader had rented the premises of the Jazz Association, which had much larger rooms. A large group of young men had come from an isolated village in Iraq. They were actually too old to take part in Swera's activities, but their need to meet others was so great that they were invited to the final full days. I had an organisational consultant to help me and in the car down to Alvesta I told them what we had done and learned earlier. I myself had just read the last Gandhi biography to come out. We decided to give them the task of looking up what they could find on Google about Gandhi. Was there anything written in the different languages they represented?

Later, when the group sat in a large circle, we talked about the importance of the circle and how ancient the tradition of circle deliberation is in all cultures. In Sweden, people gathered and held things, where they could deal with various difficulties and administer justice according to the ethics of the time.

They were then asked to speak in pairs about their first impressions of Sweden and to volunteer to retell them in large groups. It was an overwhelming experience, with the Yazidi group in particular expressing great gratitude for the treatment they had received. They had been treated as human beings, not as lesser criminals, and they felt that they had come to paradise. This made a deep impression on the younger participants who had been here for some time and now had critical views on various things.

We alternated group discussions with physical exercises and it was clear that they appreciated being in a group with different backgrounds and having in-depth discussions.

Then the group got into a discussion about Muhammad. Had he meant that every man should have the right to three or a thousand wives? The only female participant got very excited. The one who most strongly argued for the right to polygamy had to switch roles with a prospective wife and it became a really humorous situation with serious undertones. We pointed out that polygamy is forbidden in Sweden and a young man who had been here for quite some time replied that men had solved that in a non-committal way here in Sweden. No one objected if someone had a love affair with several women at the same time, as far as he had seen.

When we returned for our last full day, there were two young men who made a presentation of what they had found online. One of them, a Buddhist with an international record in judo, gave a very passionate account of Gandhi's life. The group listened intently and when he finished, one of the Yazidis asked:

What would Gandhi have done if he were in Iraq now?

The question led to an in-depth discussion, which also allowed people to express their sadness at what is happening in the world. The feeling was that we had reached a level of conversation that had healing effects. A common language was created that bridged all the differences in the group. It was easier for the participants to find peace and calm when something difficult happened, the recreation leader said afterwards.

## **2 Zlatan, or Facing anger**

First session, new arrivals Huddingegymnasiet

A colleague and I have already worked in this group with various active exercises. But now we want to work more sociodramatically. The Swedish teacher I work with has chosen a text about Zlatan Ibrahimovic, which fits in with her planning: she wants to give the students an opportunity not only to mention but also to recognise and express different kinds of emotions. The students have already read and worked on the linguistic parts of the text. We start the lesson with a short introduction of what Sociodrama is and we write on the board and briefly explain the different terms we will use. In addition, we stress the importance of:

- feeling free to express yourself - there is no "right" and "wrong" here
- accepting a role as proposed or refusing it, without explaining why
- showing full respect for the opinions and feelings of others

The aim of the lesson is partly to develop the language skills associated with the course, but also to focus on the social situation surrounding Zlatan and the emotions that may be associated with the situation described in the article.

### **The environment**

We move to another room where we can rearrange the furniture and have a large and open space.

### **The warm-ups**

We start with some warm-ups, to get the students familiar with the new way of working:

1. They walk around the room and meet each other first with just eye contact, then with some body contact (finger, shoulder, knees ...).
2. We "throw" sounds that the friend has to receive and pass on - Muuuuu! Sbamm! Pirrrrrr! Let your imagination run wild! It feels silly but there is a lot of laughter which creates a relaxed atmosphere.
3. We try to improvise "impossible conversations": students from different countries talk in pairs about music interests, in their own language, with the task of focusing on the feeling of being able to express what they want without language barriers and also trying to capture their friend's feelings and moods, if not the words.
4. Pupils give short feedback to each other

### **To set a scene**

We start by creating the scene and the students choose the different roles, either mentioned in the article or that feel natural:

- Zlatan as a child first, then
- Zlatan's mother, father, sister, little brothers
- Zlatan's close environment with neighbours, football friends and football coaches
- The social environment (not mentioned in the article) around Zlatan's family: the city of Malmö, represented by the mayor, and the suburb of Rosengården where the family lives, represented by the social services representative.

### **Action!**

The students are surprisingly skilled and engaged at first putting into words the thoughts and feelings they are experiencing in their position, and then creating dialogues between the different characters on stage. At the beginning, the group mostly portrays the relationship between Zlatan and his father and mother. We let the dialogues flow, the students change positions with each other and we make sure to distribute the word. The focus is on Zlatan's feelings of sadness and anger because of the family situation: he blames the alcoholic father who left the family when he was 10 years old, the mother who is stressed, irritated and unhappy and the younger children who argue all the time. Zlatan feels positive emotions only when he plays football, receives the encouraging praise of his coach, and dreams of a spectacular career.

The pupils, with just a little guidance from us, step in and portray the situations with a spontaneity and commitment that we find astonishing. In relation to the "social components" of the scene, the mayor seems to ignore the situation in Rosengården, and the social assistants there have too many problems to solve and not enough money to act. The mother points out - in action - her needs and the frustration she feels as a single mother and, above all, she asks for financial help to buy food for the children, to avoid working 12 hours a day and to leave the children alone. Zlatan grows up with the feeling that "there is never any food at home" and "everyone just argues all the time".

Each pupil is encouraged to express his or her feelings and needs, in the position he or she is in. This is both a linguistic challenge AND a way for the newcomers to get in touch with the



situation and feelings of the role. It is interesting to note as an example that the "football coach" (a boy who was very tired and unmotivated at the beginning of the lesson) suddenly got much more energy and joy when he, in the role, expressed the need to be appreciated more by the children's families and also that he was worthy of being paid for his work - which he also received from (the students who portrayed) "the municipality", as a symbol of appreciation for the work done.

The pupils begin to realise the importance of playing roles instead of "just talking" about a subject. It is clear that the safe and trusting atmosphere that the Swedish teacher managed to create in the group over the last few weeks is having a decisive impact on the work. We encourage many interactions between the different roles. The girl playing Zlatan and the boy playing the mother are very active and engaged. Some of the roles are central and powerful (Zlatan, the mayor...) and they give the students a sense of strength, of being valuable. Other roles are difficult to play (the alcoholic father) and we take the opportunity to introduce the important concept of "deroling".

Sociodrama gives us the opportunity to bring on stage all the people around a single person, in our case Zlatan, and to explore in action the relationships between them. It becomes clear to the young people that everyone is part of a whole, a social network, and that we cannot look at the situation of an individual person without taking into account the whole social field of which that person is a part. This is quite new to them, and although they have difficulty expressing the concept, they can really understand the importance of the network of connections around this young boy and the impact it has on his character and his "bad behaviour" - an aspect of the article they analysed.

## **Sharing**

We finish with a sharing. Many students stress the importance of "not spreading what has been said in the group". Many students share from their roles and also share some cautious personal thoughts. Sharing is an important part of both sociodramatic work and language teaching. Students are encouraged to express themselves on many levels and as a "first attempt" we are very pleased with the results. We end these unusual lessons in a playful atmosphere and go "back to reality" with many laughs and hugs. We finish in a circle and some are already looking forward to the next session.

## **Zlatan, second meeting**

### **The environment**

We start directly in the room where we worked last time.

### **Warm-ups**

When we meet, the class had just planned the coming week's activities. They are going to learn how to skate, a "must" if you want to live in Sweden. Some are really afraid to try it. From this we get the idea to warm up the group of 12 by dividing them into two groups,

placed along the two short sides of the room. We asked them to "skate" to the other side of the room, without colliding too much when they meet in the middle. The suggestion sounds so crazy, in the context of the school, that we immediately get a fun and relaxed atmosphere. After three or four different suggestions from us leaders, the students themselves suggest many new ways to cross the room: as ballet dancers, as gorillas, they fly like birds, jump like kangaroos, march like soldiers, and so on. Everyone is bright and cheerful and we feel that the group needs no more warm-ups and we go straight on with our work.

We note that this is only the fourth time we have met and although the exercises are new and unexpected for the students, they are already extremely open to this type of work. We constantly emphasise that this is part of the Swedish language teaching, and pay attention to the impact of the work on the class: the students talk much more and more freely with each other than they did before, now even during other regular lessons.

In the circle, they try to name as many adjectives as possible (adjectives are the theme of the week in Swedish lessons), related to all kinds of emotions - and we write them on the board. We will add new adjectives throughout the session, as they come up. We decide to focus on the theme ANGER - as it was an essential part of the original text about Zlatan. The theme seems topical and appropriate for students who have just moved to Sweden, where people are often quite cautious about expressing negative emotions. It is important for students to work with both words and body language, related to this, to avoid misunderstandings and problems.

### **Back to the scene and action**

We ask the students to go back to the positions they were in during the last sociodramatic scene: Zlatan and his family members, with everyone he met during football training and the outside community with the mayor and social workers of Malmö.

The students are encouraged to express all kinds of feelings, thoughts and needs in the position they are in and quickly notice that different emotions can often coexist, such as hope and despair, anger and fear. As students wonder about this, we "freeze" the scene and have a short psychology lesson about the Amygdala and the reptilian brain - there is a reason why, suddenly exposed to too strong emotions, we act too quickly and in an inappropriate way, like Zlatan did. Our feeling is that this "mini-psychology lesson" gives credibility to our sociodramatic work. Mariolina is a psychology teacher and we are NOT just playing and having fun, what we are doing is part of the programme and a serious activity!

Back to the stage, we focus on Zlatan's enormous anger that comes from four areas: sense of injustice (the constantly empty fridge), loneliness (the absent father, the worried, stressed mother), rivalry (the football team) and social injustice (the whole Rosengården). Our aim is to face, explore and analyse these situations and find another more adequate way to express legitimate needs and expectations, clearly and constructively.

We had decided to try another more intuitive technique. Students are given an A3 paper and crayons and the instruction to draw freely what they associate with anger: a thing or just something abstract. An exercise that takes a little time and gives a lot of energy. Many students come from difficult circumstances and this can be a way of expressing without having to explain. They draw and are in a way grateful to be able to show, even with just

colours, unacceptable, traumatic, problematic experiences. The drawings are very different, for some anger is an explosive, destructive force, for others something that has to be hidden under a cloak. They have a short sharing and decide to paste all these drawings together to form a common "image of the group's anger".

We had a nice break as we were treated to cake and back to the room we tried to give words to the collective drawing. What did they see? Everything from fires, houses covered in smoke, a glowing sun hidden under a thick layer of dirty mist.

## **Action!**

Students split into two groups of 6-7 were given 20 minutes to create a sculpture of what anger is, which they will then show to the other group. It is very difficult to do this and when they are back they have "no sculpture" even though they have discussed a lot, which is also a valuable fruit of the project. But when we have barely started to explain again what we meant by the task, suddenly two students jump up on stage and show their interpretation. Both are in a violent position towards each other. In a few seconds, as if by magic, all the students are in place and complete the sculpture. Most of them show anger as open violence. Someone screams, someone hits another with a chair, someone just stands, watches, someone smiles (still VERY hard to take roles!). The girl who was in the role of "Malmö Social Services" takes a picture of the whole. One thought strikes her and everyone: what if the municipality could SEE the situation with open eyes and stop ignoring the problems?! We give the floor to the different parts of the sculpture and note the atmosphere of deep respect in the group, everyone listening to each other, no one commenting, no one joking. It feels like a healing moment that reflects, we think, the whole day's work: the sociodramatic staging has led us to SEE the situations in their entirety, without jumping to conclusions and understanding that it is only when we are aware and dare to see the problems that we can do something about them. We will explore more of this in the coming weeks: how to transform anger and do something concrete to change a situation instead of using violence or just suffering or hiding behind denial. We'll end the episode by hugging each other so that hearts meet (that was before the Covid restrictions!). The students are proud of what they did and positive about this new way of working.

## **Zlatan, extra part 3. Or: how one theme leads to the next**

We had planned to work on "appropriate ways of expressing emotions" and especially on the theme of "safety" which we thought was a prerequisite for doing so. But when we got to school, we found out that just the night before, Zlatan's statue in Malmö and his property in Stockholm had been vandalised. When the students came to school that morning, everyone was just talking about it. The attacks are being investigated as racist hate crimes, as he was called a "gypsy" who "should die".

The news - and the synchronicity between our planning and the events - came as a shock. While there could be explanations for the vandalism due to dubious business dealings in the football industry, the racist elements were still something that provoked strong reactions among our new arrivals. So what, in concrete terms, is the security for us in Sweden? Is it not enough to be rich and famous to feel safe? How do we create security for ourselves and for

others? And as newcomers, who may be subjected to racist attacks? The planned theme of "security" now seemed more than appropriate to work with.

But this is a different story...

## Chapter 7

### Brief Moreno biography with his role theory

Moreno created various concepts to help us understand who we are and the society we live in. These include role theory and methods such as psychodrama, sociodrama, sociometry and sociatry. All these grew out of the practical applications he used to solve the problems he faced as a young doctor in a suburb of Vienna in the early 1900s.

When he studied medicine, it was compulsory to study philosophy as well. Having come to Vienna himself without family at the age of 15, he had the ability to understand those who came as refugees from different countries.

So he and some fellow students started something they called the

"House of Encounter", a place where newcomers could come and be met by other young people. They developed a meeting culture, where they had conversations about the problems that needed to be solved. Moreno also enjoyed going to Vienna's parks and telling stories to the children. There he made many observations, including seeing how the children naturally formed a semi-circle around him, so that everyone could see and hear. Later, when he let the children improvise the stories, he was fascinated to see the spontaneity and creativity of the children's play. He was then struck by an "idée fixe" that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

This idea developed into a whole theory of human beings - a theory of roles. We are born with spontaneity and creativity and when we are allowed to operate in that flow we become co-creators of the universe. For him, this means that we are all responsible for what happens around us. There is no God in the sky who rules, but it is how we humans behave that determines how the world develops. He published these ideas anonymously in various small magazines at the time. It was a great provocation against the spirit of the times, World War I with all the atrocities that were coming.

Moreno was given a job as a doctor, which included running a refugee camp.

It was mostly women, children and old people. They lived in barracks and many different groups had to share rooms. This caused many conflicts and Moreno wondered how to resolve them. He gathered all the residents and gave them notes to write down what a good neighbour was like.

What habits did the others need to have in order for their own basic needs to be met? Go to bed early? Keep the room dark? Make the beds and clean?

Everything would be written down and they would then have to go around and share with each other who was suitable to live in the same room. By giving these people a choice, they got out of the helplessness that affects everyone when they feel like they can't control their own living situation.

He also investigated what jobs they had had in the past, and this started a process whereby the children were given a school, a bakery was opened, a newspaper was started where they could write about what they wanted for the future when the war was over.

These experiences underlie SOCIOMETRY, a concept that Moreno later developed in the United States. Alongside this work, he also started an improvisational theatre in Vienna. At

this time, life in Vienna was characterised by meeting in cafés. The war had left the Austro-Hungarian Empire in ruins. There was political chaos and no clear leadership on how to shape the future.

On 1 April 1921, Moreno rented a large theatre to which all interested parties were invited. When the curtain went up, there was only one empty chair on stage and the audience was invited to take the chair and say something about how they wanted the country to be run. The role reversal was introduced and a sociodrama unfolded. Moreno's idea was that the audience should be involved in the creation of the future leadership. This was described in the newspapers as a scandal! How could anyone think that ordinary people had any idea how a country should be run? Moreno argued forcefully that the present regime had led to disaster, so perhaps the answer for the future lay with the people. And so the first Sociodrama was performed in front of an audience, a form that has since evolved around the world in different ways.

In Vienna, improvisational theatre developed. Many actors came along who found it liberating to improvise. The group took an example from the newspaper and acted it out. Sometimes it turned out very well, then the audience claimed that they must have practised before. They simply didn't think it was possible for something improvised to be acted so well together. Here Moreno discovered Tele, a concept that has many levels. One is when a group chooses someone for a role, there is often something in that person's background that allows them to understand how the role should be played.

An important discovery that Moreno made through one of his actresses was that improvisation could have healing effects for the players. It was knowledge he took with him and developed further in the US. The method became known there as Psychodrama and is used primarily as a therapeutic tool. It allows the protagonist (the Greek word for the one who carries the theme) to process past experiences and learn new ways of relating to life.

## **In the USA**

When Moreno emigrated to the United States, he had a difficult time at first. He had to learn another language and re-take his doctorate in order to open a practice. His big break in the US came for a job at the Hudson (New York) school for girls, where he conducted sociometric tests to answer the question, why were so many girls from a particular house running away? He got basic data that showed how girls of colour were bullied and ostracised. As they began to make representations of the girls' daily lives and what their needs were, things improved. This led on to him also working at Sing-Sing prison. He believed that regardless of their situation, all people must be given the opportunity to make some kind of choice that can affect their situation. The daily routines were analysed and the routines that only filled the need to further punish the inmates were abolished. As a result, the spiral of violence was reversed and the inmates were able to devote themselves to learning something that would be useful to them when they re-entered society.

Central to Moreno's theory is what he calls the philosophy of the moment. When working with performance on stage, time is always Here and Now. Linked to this philosophy are three concepts he calls Locus nascendi (the place) Status Nascendi (the thing that happens) and Matrix (the form or context in which something happens). He argued that every event in life

has its matrix that influences what happens. The matrices he calls Identity Matrix, Social Matrix, and Cosmic Matrix and these interact with each other in everything that happens. His Role Theory begins with the birth of the child. Each child is born into its own social matrix, with the first breath contact is made with the cosmic matrix.

For the first time the child is without identity and lives in harmony with everything. The ability to differentiate only comes later. At birth one has psychosomatic roles. First comes the one who can breathe, then the one who feels that it is being carried and put to the breast to be fed. In all the events that characterise the first time of a child, a pattern develops for the role of the sleeper, eater, pooper/peezer. In the interaction with the adult, the ability to make contact is practised. If the situation is safe, the carer learns to "parent" the child and communication takes place. All this happens before we have language. It is what we feel and experience that is in the psychosomatic roles. This is our first universe. The journey out of this universe occurs when we begin to differentiate ourselves from the all-identity into which we are born. We understand that the breast is not part of ourselves and that there is a boundary between ourselves and the other. This is how our Identity Matrix begins to unfold. One comes into being in the encounter with the other, each role has a complementary role, so every child has a carer. In the encounter with a caregiver, the child learns basic trust or mistrust depending on how the care is given. In all encounters with other people, the child learns something that affects her (or his) identity. Identity thus emerges in the interaction with others.

## **Social roles**

These are roles that we receive from outside and they are coloured by the culture and contexts we are part of. They are characterised by clear complementary roles, there are no teachers without pupils, no husbands without wives, etc. Around these roles there are different expectations which, when they are coercive, are about us being "role-takers", at other times there is room for our own initiative and then we become "role-creators".

This shaping of social roles is very visible in children's role play. Problems arise in social interaction when a co-player, a counter-role, is lost. It is then easy to become isolated and bullying can occur.

## **Matrix**

With the concept of matrix, Moreno wanted to show clearly that we are all born into a multidimensional network that encloses and holds the human individual. This means that we always carry with us our history and the places where we had our experiences. In every encounter between individuals there is also an encounter between a genetic, identity, family, social, psychological and cosmic matrix. The matrix contains past, present and future. All the roles contained in the concept of "I" have evolved in encounters with others. Seeing all these dimensions, it becomes more understandable that misunderstandings easily arise in encounters between people. But it also creates opportunities to develop in a multifaceted way.

Every individual and group should live with a rich repertoire of roles. This was one of Moreno's goals in his work. With the concept of SOCIATRY he wanted to draw attention to the inner life of normal groups where he believed good or bad health was created. By allowing Sociatry to be an umbrella concept, into which all his methods could be subsumed, Moreno wanted to show how society could develop in a good way. An important part is sociometry is a "close study of social structure is the only way by which we can treat the sick society"

Sociatry may have been the concept that could best serve this purpose, but it was never accepted outside of Moreno's immediate circle (Marineau 1989 p.141). Sociatry seeks to reveal structures within and outside the individual that influence suffering and well-being. The concept that best corresponds to sociatry today is social medicine.

Moreno created a training centre in Beacon, NY, USA where people could come and learn his methods. There he built a psychodrama centre that was circular with three levels and a balcony. Students from all over the world came there and developed his methods further. Towards the end of his life, he was disappointed because he realised that people were using his methods as a technique and separating them from philosophy, which he felt had a devastating effect. Many students complained that it was difficult to understand his philosophy, which I think is because he was way ahead of his time. His wife Zerka Moreno made a great contribution, writing and editing many of Moreno's early writings. After his death she travelled all over the world and taught the method in Sweden and elsewhere.

## **Conclusions**

Today, we have much greater opportunities to work in the way Moreno intended. The situation in the world simply forces us to return to Moreno's view of humanity as a coherent whole. It is our hope that this publication will encourage many teachers, school staff and others who work with young people to learn the sociodramatic methods, so that students in the country's schools will receive training in role reversal. Our experience shows that this leads to greater empathy with your neighbours and with the roles required to take responsibility for our society.

## **What do students think?**

Students in high school always write a final summary report, while other young people who encounter sociodrama in other instances give their reflections orally. All are generally satisfied or very satisfied with the work and their own efforts. Almost all of them indicate the possibility to change a role or position in a sociodrama as the most rewarding part of the work. According to them, this creates the opportunity to broaden their perspectives, provides new insights and enables new better choices. All also find the warm and accommodating atmosphere that we try to create from the start to be a crucial factor.

We have worked with different kinds of young people. Newcomers have benefited from sociodrama, in our opinion, because it has helped them to deal with a new situation and its challenges. It has created an understanding of the new society and given them an opportunity to try new, more adapted behaviours.



Analysing the reactions of the young people in secondary school, we notice that the sociodrama course has helped them to (I quote) "really feel what you feel inside", "think twice because you know how it feels to be in the other person's position" or "understand why you do what you do and that there are other ways to do it". Truly Moreno's philosophy In Real Life!

In the school environment as in other contexts, students indicate role reversal or position switching as the most important ingredient in a successful process, along with a positive group dynamic and a non-judgmental atmosphere. To be fair, I must add that other techniques not directly related to sociodrama were also highly appreciated. In particular, projective exercises and "guided dreaming", where we started with a relaxation, then had the students close their eyes and follow a story and imagine inner images, then draw the images and finally portray them in action.

Many young people feel anxiety, discomfort and stress and find it very difficult to put their finger on why they feel that way, unlike newcomers who usually know very well what they want and why they feel the way they do. Secondary school young people's first response is almost always: "It's school that stresses us out, we have too much homework", a thought recently arrived students in language introduction would never think of in the first place. Comparing the situation of today's students with that of students ten years ago or with students in other countries today, it is certainly not true that they have more homework nowadays, quite the contrary! As the group's work progresses, students begin to notice that there are a great many other factors affecting the way they feel: what they have been through in the past, the values they have created, a skewed self-image, fears, expectations, the media. They leave the perception that "It's all the school's fault!" They say that they normally try to solve their problems by brooding and overthinking, which leads to even more confusion and results in reality escapism. Many write in their Journals that they "were able to think about things differently," "brought up things they needed to bring up," realised where the problem lay, and learned that others have had the same problem and found unexpected solutions. The students are tired in the morning, not because they have been studying very hard, but because they have been watching TV shows until 2am. They almost always forget that I am a "regular teacher" and reveal things they would never say to me in the classroom...

## **Students have their say: some stories**

To conclude, we would like to let the students themselves have their say. Here are a few excerpts from their final reports.

Note: the texts are in original form, I choose to leave the stories unchanged so as not to lose the often wonderful nuances.

(The names are fictitious, but retain the cultural origin)

Abbe

I thought it was going to be a bit of a boring lesson but then after a few lessons I got stuck in, I started setting more alarms so as not to be late.

The course for me was not the best at the beginning because I was very closed in, I lied about how I felt just not to talk and I didn't share my opinions, so at the beginning it was a bit tough for me. The course was all about us, and if we weren't honest I wouldn't get what I wanted out of the course, so I told myself to start opening up slowly but surely, so that's what I did. I started showing my feelings and really trying to talk about my opinions. I have had a very difficult time in my life when it comes to feelings and opinions, I have always been closed in and kept my opinions to myself, but this course actually helped me a lot. My family noticed a big difference because I started to be more active when it came to family, I started to talk to the family more and gave my opinions when we sat at the family table. This course is a very good course, I would suggest it to many people. But if you are not even going to try to engage personally, there is no point, this course is all about collaboration!

Agnes

(...) The other theme that touched me was when we talked about our life line, it felt good to reflect and talk about your upbringing. I had a tough time in my teenage years and it turned out that almost everyone did, so it felt good to have it confirmed that you're not the only one going through tough times. (...) We have also had several spectrogrammes such as what country your parents come from, then everyone had to stand in the country that their parents come from and it was a good exercise because then you saw that several people have very different backgrounds and it's great because then you learn that everyone is different and you have to respect that.

When we had sociodrama, we talked about different themes such as bullying, love, demands, and then you were either assigned roles or you had to choose the role yourself. When you are in different roles you get to experience thoughts/feelings from different perspectives and then you become more attentive and think extra hard because you know how it feels to be in that role, then you can empathise with different kinds of people.

Dinah

(...) One role that touched me very much was when I was a daughter in a family in North Korea and I chose to escape with my boyfriend. This was very personal because my grandmother has been in this situation although not North Korea. I didn't really think about it when I chose the role, but when you asked me if anyone in my family has been through it, I thought about it and it was my grandmother who has been through this situation. You are affected by your family (...) What I discovered with me in this role was that I am actually a very strong person who loves to be in charge of herself and loves new opportunities to be able to change her life.

My thoughts about the group is that we were a very good group full of ideas and always welcome new people without any weirdness. We didn't have anyone laughing at each other and we respected each other very much therefore I think the group has been very good

Husse

One of the most interesting techniques we had done was to change the position to the opposite one in our sociodrama. In all my roles, I was often the dominant one, that is, I had the main role, such as the gardener in a garden or the father in the family. These roles had a lot of power and dominated everything in sociodrama. For example, the gardener cut down all the trees in the garden that he thought had no value. But when the role was changed and I became the tree instead, I could feel how hard it was to be cut down even if it was pretend. This then taught me that you should think about others when you do a certain thing and not only about yourself, many and many of the things we actually do can hurt others enormously therefore we should think twice.

One of the roles that affected me a lot was the father because (...) I was very mean to my daughter because I decided everything in her life and didn't give her any kind of freedom. I felt that it wasn't really me there, but I don't know why I behaved that way too. I noticed it even more clearly when the girl decided to run away from the house. This showed me that too much power is not good because it can lead to being hated and can unknowingly ruin other people's lives. (...) This also showed me a little bit how hard it can be to be a parent and especially when you see your children suffering in front of your eyes without being able to intervene and stop everything.

Rakel

(...) I was most moved when we were making pictures and when we had to interpret the pictures because things came up that I didn't think about but were important to think about. And also when I had to make a scene of my social atom, that was also a very special moment because it evoked a lot of emotions. Then I discovered some things about myself like for example that I actually CAN forgive a person and let them go without hating them afterwards.

Kriszta

(...) Having a better "self-confidence" is something I really wanted to develop with. This course taught me a lot to believe in myself and that nothing is right or wrong, it is free to communicate your thoughts and opinions. This is something I have really noticed that I have

come a long way with, moreover my other friends have also noticed it with me. I also notice it when I raise my hand and dare to speak out in class.

Youssef

I found the course as a whole very embracing, everyone in the group was welcoming and everyone had equally strong words. I, on the other hand, have a very hard time opening up in front of groups but after this course I realised that everything I do is just a lot of "macho" games. My goals were simple, it was to be able to open up to a group and show my "true" self which I think I managed to do. (...)

The method we used was not only effective for the group as a whole but also from a personal perspective, we made eye contact with each other instead of eyes on a text book and learned to connect more as a 'we' than a 'me'. (...) Role switching was what I found appealing and most interesting, because I got to play someone else randomly and all my problems I had were swept away once I got into that role. I felt like the person I was playing, like I had been that person all my life.

One scene that touched me very much was when I played the bully, we ran an exercise where we had to portray the whole of both the bully/the bullied's life story. It touched me a lot because I was bullied in primary school and that's why I became the way I am, a more "macho" type because I tried to forget all the years I was bullied by other students. (...)

Everything I had been exposed to was behind me but haunted my thoughts every time I saw someone being bullied because it gave me memories of what it was like when I only had myself to be with and was an outcast. I have discovered from this course that I don't need to be "macho" for people to accept me and like me but rather want to see my true "self" and get to know me for real and not just because people feel sorry for me. As the course came to a close I saw the whole picture of the course and how we had grown together and strengthened each other psychologically, which made me very positive. It made me happy because it shows that there are good people left in this world who care about the people around you.

Nadija

I saw this topic as a good tool for me as for a long time in my life I have been very sad due to several reasons. The energy and the environment during the class as well as the different thoughts and opinions of the students have affected me very positively as I learned to rethink before I immediately start thinking negatively which is common. When you are sad about an action, you usually just think about that particular action and mull it over but I have learned that you should think one step further for your own good. (...) I remember one lesson when we talked about infidelity because I have been through such a horrible event myself when my ex cheated on me and I know what that feeling is like so I had a lot to give the group. (...) Something that was unusual and good was that you got other people's attention and everyone showed interest and respect. I learned to stand up for myself more which I didn't do much before because I was bullied as a child and it's hard to have a good self-esteem then.

Denise

My personal goal was to start listening to other people and to be considerate of people once they talk, that I shouldn't always talk, but that I give a chance to other people who are also allowed to speak up, for example people who are extremely withdrawn and shy and who don't take a big place in the group, that I let them talk and take their place. I didn't get very far with this goal of taking others into account, I'm very used to interrupting other people and just taking care of myself, but now at the end I actually got better at listening to others. I have even been so active that Mariolina has had to write to me in my logbook that I have to give more space to others and take them into account.

In my Journal there is always a common thread that runs through all the different logs, for example I always write that I take too much for myself, that I always have to be in the middle, most of the time it should always be about me, and if there are different roles that we have to play then I have to be the best role that has the most power, and I can see this in my logbooks, that I take a very big place in the group that I often have to have the most power and this just shows what a strong personality I have. This is reflected in every log (...).

Mary

This course has taught me a lot both about myself and others. I got to know myself by doing different exercises that made you realise things within yourself. For example, during one session we talked about the differences and the pressure you get depending on whether you are a boy or a girl. I usually keep my worries inside which is linked to what guys are used to doing, not showing or talking about their feelings. But with the recent experience of everyone else in the group, I've learned that keeping your feelings inside only wears you down and hurts you. Also, there comes a day when you can't take all the pressure anymore. By hearing the different perspectives and opinions of the group, I personally have learned to realise things that one usually avoids thinking about.

During the course we used several different methods but on several occasions we were assigned different roles, during one session we split into different groups depending on what role you had at home for example big brother, little brother, little sister, big sister or only child. During these exercises we saw how much in common we shared with some in the class that we had not previously thought.

Zara

I notice that in my Journal there is a common thread. My common thread is about some kind of fear I have and want to overcome. In almost every log I have written that I am afraid of something. Afraid of opening up, afraid of others laughing at me, afraid of trusting people, etc. What I have also written in my log is that I want to get rid of these fears by exposing myself to what I am afraid of. For example, when we did a projective story where I wrote about Mowgli from The Jungle Book. When I wrote about my story I thought that my story is a tip to myself to stop being so afraid of everything, it won't hurt me if I talk or open up to someone. I also wrote that it might be good if I put myself at a little "risk" in this group, which is a safe group, to get over my "fears". I have found that I have difficulty trusting others and I have had many opportunities in the course to think about why. For example, I have

understood that in order not to get hurt, I don't trust people so that I don't have to go through getting hurt.

Izabel

The most powerful moment for me was when, in a social atom, I met and swapped roles with my mother who died two years ago. I was able to talk to her and admit out loud how much I miss her. Then I switched roles with her. I could see myself through her eyes and felt how much she still loves and protects me. I was embarrassed when I and the others started crying, but we felt a great closeness to each other. They were able to be with me and understand my experience and it is easier now for me to cope with it .

Arif

When I chose this course, I was feeling very bad psychologically and I thought that this course could help me (...) My expectations for this course were that this course could help me to see different ways and situations that could improve my feelings. Also to be able to deal with different kinds of people in a safe and secure way. My expectations came true. I feel much better today than I did before the course. (...) The course as a whole was a miraculous experience, unfortunately I have missed some lessons but the times I have attended have been fantastic. I really got to feel what I feel inside.

I didn't expect to be so happy about it in the beginning, as the school usually just comes up with information that is usually not useful in the future. This course comes with knowledge that actually has a use for me personally both as an individual and in general. Methods we used in the course I would say are better compared to other courses. Instead of sitting behind a bench listening to something uninteresting we moved around, used different techniques and warm ups. This is something that suits me as I am more of a creative person. (...) One technique that I found rewarding was role reversal. We put ourselves in situations and then switch to an opposite one which opens up your mind. I feel more alert and I think more deeply when I am in a role change. An example is the theme of bullying where I got to experience being a witness, the victim and the bully. This really opened up my mind and I got to see what it can be like for each position within the situation.

This theme touched me the most compared to all the other themes as I relate to the situation the most because of my upbringing. I have always been in situations within bullying where either I have been victimised or accused of bullying someone.

I have been active both visibly and invisibly, but mostly invisibly. This is then mostly because I think more than I say, but to think more I need to be more physically active. The logbook, on the other hand, was a safe way for me to express myself. I have noticed a difference in myself after this course. Something I noticed is that I have been more socially active and I think more deeply than I did before. I feel more comfortable with who I am and I am not as affected by the past anymore.

I think I have changed for the better.

Xiao

Here's the most important thing we did in the course: we once had a sociodrama called, I think, "What shapes us". We put a baby in the middle of the floor and then everyone had to jump in with the chair and be something that affected the baby's life. There was mom and dad, their genes, even pregnancy and childbirth, grandma and grandpa, siblings, the daycare teacher, the whole community around, one guy was money and X. was dad's job. Everyone in the group had a role and everything affected the baby's life a lot, like if grandpa is an alcoholic, or if siblings are mean or if dad loses his job. Or if the baby is born in a dictatorship or like in Sweden. I'm adopted. I never talk about it. I chose right away to be the baby, without thinking, it just happened that way. But this sociodrama changed my whole outlook on my life in a very positive direction. Love my parents more than ever and I am very very grateful.

Samiah

My expectations for this course were not that high. I thought it would be the same as the psychology course, that we would get books and work in them. I had many personal goals, one of them was to reflect on my mistakes and not repeat them. When I started attending and then writing logs everything changed. I was able to do exercises in the group and then put feelings and thoughts into my Journal and then read it. A way for me to go back and think about what had happened.

I would like to describe a technique that we used and it is a sociodrama about different ways of doing things when there is a conflict. When we did these exercises there were different positions represented by different animals that had a particular ability. When I took these different roles, it evoked emotions, memories and you came up with what you want to avoid. The "inner me" that I was in the past surfaced. For example there were certain moments in life when I shut myself off, I couldn't cope with anything at all when all the people let me down and weren't there for me. In other positions then I understood that I have to take care of myself first, because I suffer from different difficulties in life. Then when we changed positions again I thought a lot about my past and how I always helped people and sacrificed my time and money to put myself forward, I was there available and I started to notice that people were taking advantage of me. From other students' reactions I understood that you can be selfish from time to time. In another position, I noticed that I also used to go on personal attacks to protect myself. We are very complicated but with this exercise I understood that you have to learn from the past. There are many different ways to do things and you can learn to choose from time to time which way is best at the time.

Finally, an example of an almost complete final report:

Kalypso

Now the "To Grow-course" is coming to an end and my expectations for the course before it started have turned out to be completely different! Before I started the course and even at the beginning of the course I thought everything was strange and thought it would be like theatre and didn't see any sense in it at all. I was also considering dropping out as this was way outside of what I am normally comfortable with. I then decided to give it a go and thought that

this is a great course for me to achieve my goals which have long been that I want to be able to speak more easily in front of a group and dare to take more space. Today I can say that I am extremely happy that I stayed as I find it a thousand times easier to talk and share my thoughts, which is also evident in other subjects where I participate more actively in the lessons. I still don't talk very much in the lessons but I personally feel that I find it much easier today than when the course started. So the goals I had with myself have definitely come a long way, I don't get very nervous or anxious anymore. What has also helped me with the fact that I can now speak better in front of a group is precisely that we in the group have created a feeling of security when we have had, for example, exercises about trust that have made me know better how others think and feel and that there is no one at all who judges you or mocks you when you say what you think! When others have shared their thoughts, I understand them and can relate to them, and I can start to think in other ways and put it into my life. (...)

I am still a very introverted person and like to analyse and think a lot, but with this course I have learned that there is nothing wrong, it's just ME. I have been relatively "invisible" in the group but I still feel like I have added something as a group needs to be made up of different people! Some need to talk and take the "big roles" to develop, but I need to look at others and go into my thoughts to develop. So the way our group has looked I think is only positive. The method we have used is that as a group we have worked very actively, talking about different themes and sharing thoughts and feelings. This method is extremely important, even though I don't talk much myself, because I hear how others in the group feel about things. An example is when some people made their pictures after a guided dream. Then I got insight into what their safe place is and how I interpret my safe place, very important for me! Then there is the Journal, which was definitely the most important for me! In the Journal my development and my thoughts have taken place. We have written a reflection after each lesson and this method has worked best for me as I can really go into my thoughts and analyse what we have actually done and how it affects me. (...)

We've also had warm-ups, which have really perked me up in the mornings. (...) Other warm-ups we've had include when we had an impromptu role in a garden, I was a rose. (Warm, feelings). Another time we worked in spectrograms and had to choose a body part we would choose to be. Without even thinking about it, I went for the heart, so it was a spontaneous role but after that we had to have reversed roles and I then went for the lungs. I immediately felt calmer than when I was in the role of heart. This was extremely rewarding for me both because I understood that spontaneously I am still drawn to a body part that represents emotions, that you "feel with your heart", which is typical of me but I also switched to the lungs because in retrospect I feel that this is something I want to achieve, I want to be calm and harmonious, breathe deeply and have a calm life and I got a sense of that when I went into the role of the lungs of the body.

So the course as a whole has given me a tremendous amount and you can see that in my Journal where most of my change has taken place. In the beginning I was insecure but over time I have found so much about myself, why I am the way I am and have learnt to question why.



During the XX meeting we drew a life line and then we had a ritual about the future. I think that exercise has been very rewarding for me and I have discovered a lot of things about why I am the way I am. With the life line I was able to really go back in my life and really think. For example, that maybe I am so afraid that people will "leave me" in different relationships, because my grandfather who I loved the most "left me". Maybe I'm so emotional and get lots of feelings quickly because my childhood wasn't always so very stable and certain emotions were missing. I take on too much and too much responsibility and struggle so much because for a long time I was everything to my sisters. Maybe I'm like that towards my sisters because I never want them to go through the same things I did. But when we had to write down things we didn't want in our lives on a piece of paper and then tear it up and throw it in the purifying water (a big transparent bowl of water, ed. note), I really felt a kind of "fresh start". Just days before the lesson I had been having a very hard time but just as I threw the paper into the water I felt that everything that has been has been and it is today and the future that matters!

## **Annex 1**

TOPIC: Psychology

COURSE: Growing: identity and relationships (local course, 2003)

CREDITS : 100-credits course

### **OBJECTIVES**

Through active, creative exercises, by the end of the course the student will have achieved the following goals:

- Be able to reflect on and get to know oneself better
- Become more aware of behavioural patterns, in a creative and constructive way
- Have acquired increased knowledge about how we function in different groups (family, class, circle of friends, etc.), from a group dynamics perspective
- Be able to discover, understand, explore and broaden his/her own social roles in different situations
- Be able to reflect on, and consciously create and reinforce feelings of security within him/herself
- Find personal ways of coping with stress
- Have an increased awareness of empathy as an ability to "feel with others".
- Have increased knowledge of how to see and deal with inequalities and conflicts
- Be able to reflect creatively on his/her future plans

We will work actively and exclusively with the group members' own themes, needs and priorities.

## Annex 2

### Assessment matrix: “To grow: identity and relationships”

#### Marks during the course, to check the progress or what still needs to be done:

Red means that the pupil has not demonstrated knowledge at this level

Yellow means that the pupil has demonstrated knowledge at this level

Green means that the pupil has the ability at this level

Non-coloured fields mean that the pupil has not yet demonstrated knowledge of the ability or that it has not yet been assessed

Ability :				
<b>1. Describe</b> knowledge and describe connections (Journal)	Give an <b>overview</b> : what did we do? (Describing)	give a <b>detailed</b> account and see the connection between the different phases of the lesson.	describe <b>in detail</b> and see in a <b>nuanced way</b> the connection between the different phases of the lesson	
<b>2. Analyse</b> and discuss issues (Journal)	Process with <b>some</b> certainty and <b>briefly</b> discuss some issues / themes	process with <b>some</b> certainty and discuss <b>in detail some</b> issues / themes	process <b>with certainty</b> and discuss <b>in detail and accuracy several</b> issues / themes	
<b>3. Use scientific concepts and theories</b> (Journal)	Use with <b>some</b> certainty	use with certainty	<b>always</b> use with certainty and accuracy	
<b>4. Draw conclusions</b> - own work - group dynamics	Draw <b>simple</b> conclusions	draw <b>sound</b> conclusions	draw <b>well-founded and nuanced</b> conclusions	
<b>5. Apply knowledge in relevant practical contexts.</b> Initiative and participation in the exercises (IMPORTANT!)	Apply with <b>some</b> <b>certainty</b> and in consultation with supervisors	apply with <b>certainty</b> after consultation with supervisors	apply with <b>certainty and assurance</b> after consultation with supervisors	
<b>6. Search, review and interpret information</b> from different sources = link to theory or method we work	Evaluate with <b>some</b> certainty	evaluate with <b>certainty</b> and assurance	evaluate in <b>nuanced and accurate</b> ways and with assurance. In addition, the student	

with, and <b>find OWN GOALS</b>			articulates himself <b>keenly</b> , in relation to the source	
<b>7. Present knowledge =</b> - participate in the <b>practical work</b> and - write the <b>Journal</b> continuously	Present with <b>some certainty</b> in the field, in a way that <b>to some extent</b> is adapted to the purpose and situation and with the help of <b>some</b> relevant expressions and presentation forms.	present with <b>certainty</b> in the field in a way that is <b>essentially</b> adapted to the purpose, and situation and with the help of <b>relevant</b> expressions and forms of presentation.	present with certainty in the field in a way that is <b>accurate and well adapted</b> to the purpose, and situation and with the help of <b>several and relevant</b> expressions and forms of presentation. <b>Continuous Journal</b>	
<b>8. Self-Assessment of ability and requirements of the situation' (self-insight)</b>	assess with <b>some</b> certainty the ability and requirements of the situation.	assess <b>with certainty</b> the ability and requirements of the situation.	assess <b>with certainty / accuracy and carefully</b> the ability and requirements of the situation.	

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