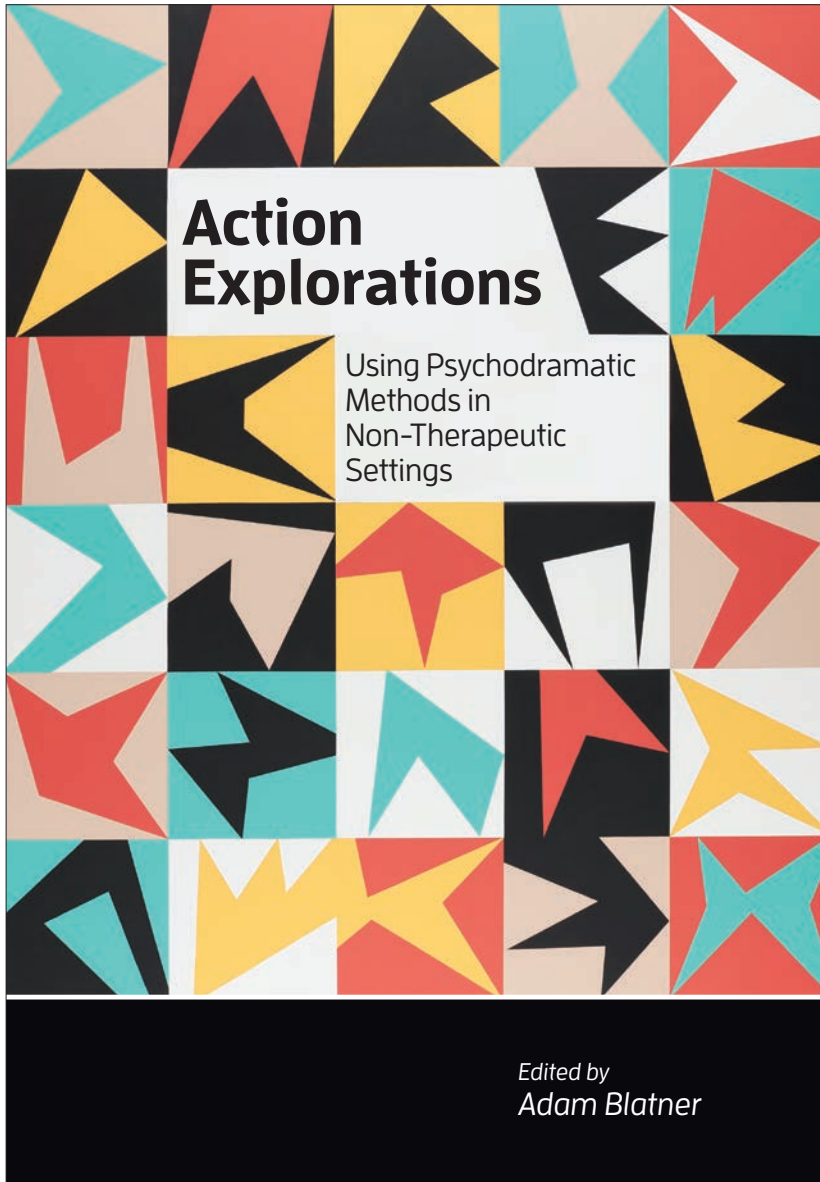


Circle of Values

Action Approaches in Indonesian Education

Mario Cossa

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Action Approaches in Indonesian Education

Mario Cossa

This article provides an overview of the first two years of a project using action methods in an educational setting in Indonesia. It was conducted at Campuhan College, in the village of Ubud on the Island of Bali. Campuhan College is a post-high-school program for Balinese youth that teaches English and computer skills combined with Leadership- and Values-Education. The author introduced staff to basic sociometric and psychodramatic techniques, with a special focus on the Social/Cultural Atom. He then worked with selected staff to integrate these, and other action techniques and philosophies into their program through regular, group sessions with students from the graduating classes of 2016 and 2017.

First Efforts in Bali

As a psychodramatist, drama therapist, and theatre educator, I have spent over thirty years working with youth in both therapeutic and educational settings. Most of my work has been in English-speaking, western countries. When I relocated to Bali in 2012 I was eager to see how action approaches to work with youth would translate into this particular Asian culture and setting.

Shortly after my arrival in Ubud, I was introduced to Wayan Rustiasa, the founder of Karuna Bali, a private, not-for profit organization that sponsors the programs at Campuhan College. He became excited by the idea of using action methods in service of both the educational and social goals of their program and we began formulating a plan of action.

Campuhan College draws post-high-school youth from all over the island of Bali. Although the tuition for a year seems modest by western standards, about US \$1,000 per year, many students require scholarships to be able to enroll. The program itself is innovative in combining practical skills in English

and computer science with more socially-focused skills in Leadership, and Values Education.

Balinese youth traditionally grow up in a community-based culture, living in multi-generational, family compounds in which there is limited personal space. Most Balinese are Hindu, a religious and cultural tradition rich in ceremony. This expresses itself in daily practices of gratitude, as well as frequent community rituals celebrating family events as well as seasonal recognitions, and connections to all aspects of life. One of the challenges for programs such as the one at Campuhan is to honor the richness of the culture while supporting contemporary youth in coping with increasingly western ideals and technology.

After getting to know some of the staff at Campuhan, I offered a three-hour training for them that introduced sociometry (the measurement of connections between and among members of a group based on various criteria) and sociodrama (the exploration, in action, of issues existing within a group). The staff was especially attracted to sociodrama as a way to explore both positive and challenging interpersonal interactions that arise with a group of about 25 students and 10 staff working closely over the period of a year.

I had worked with interpreters in other countries in the past, but this was my first time doing so in Indonesia. I was eager to see if and how the staff connected to working in action and whether these approaches were relevant within the Balinese culture.

One portion of the training mentioned above was an action demonstration of the adolescent brain and the changes that occur from the onset of puberty into the mid-twenties. Members of the training group enacted the different parts of the brain to explore the tremendous neurological changes that occur during adolescence. Participants seemed engaged and to be understanding the neurobiology involved.

I noticed, however, that one of the younger staff members was sitting back from the action and sketching on a piece of paper. I wondered if he was not following the concepts we were exploring, or perhaps just needed to be doing something with his hands to be able to pay attention. At the conclusion of the training he presented me with the drawing shown in Figure 1. I was astounded by the depth of understanding of the concepts we had explored in action and how he translated them graphically. Both graphic and performing arts are an integral part of the Balinese culture and working in action certainly seemed an effective way to go with this group.

Training Workshop for Indonesian Youth Workers

The following year Campuhan College staff organized a two-day training for youth workers from Bali and Java (the Indonesian island west of Bali) which attracted over 25 participants. The workshop was co-sponsored by The Asia Foundation, Values Institute, and World Interfaith Harmony Week. Additional

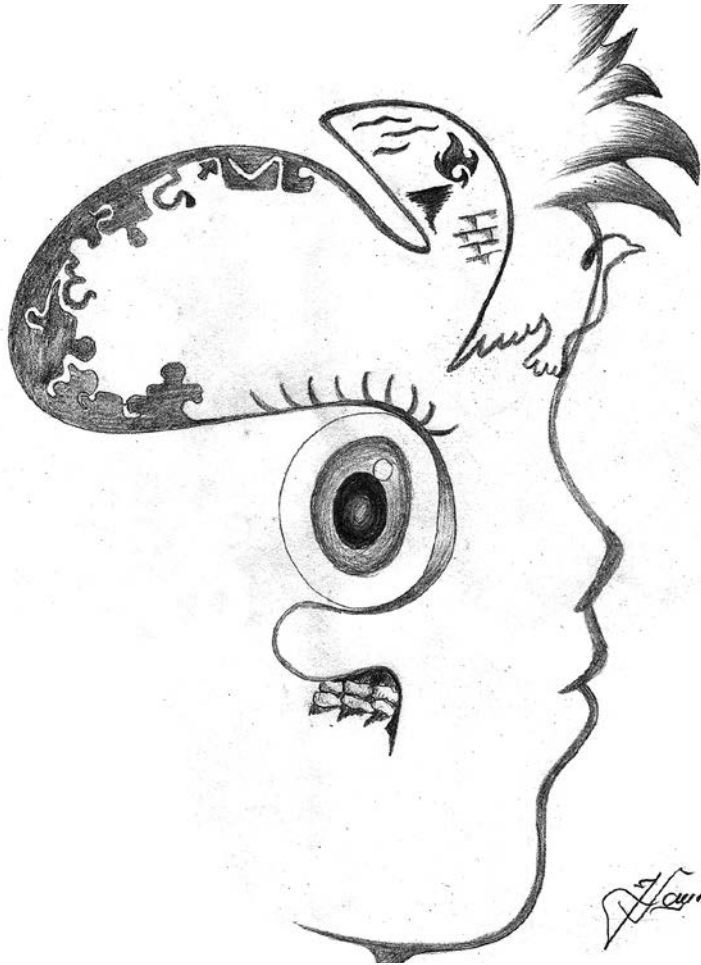


Figure 1 – An Artists Interpretation of the Adolescent Brain

funding was provided by private contributions from members of the psychodrama communities in the USA and the UK.

The participants became excited as they learned and practiced basic principles of sociometry and explored the ways they could be used in schools, in community outreach programs, and in working with troubled families. Although sociometry, by definition, means the measure of connection between individuals in a group, we recognize that sociometric activities also help build new connections.

We focused on three types of sociometric activity, all of which can be easily learned and employed in educational settings. They were: *spectrograms*, *locograms*, and *step-in sociometry*. (Handouts were provided that had been translated into Indonesian. One that I used was my adaptation of “*Practical Sociometry—Directing Spectrograms and Locograms*,” by Herb Propper, PhD.)

Spectrograms measure a range or spectrum of opinion, feeling, like or dislike within the group about some particular thing or issue. They are constructed by placing two objects at a distance from one another, creating an imaginary line on the floor that represents the particular spectrum. Participants then place themselves at the position along the continuum that seems most true for them. It is like putting a typical questionnaire that uses numbers to represent the range from “agree” to “disagree” into an action format. A few examples of the end points of the spectrograms that were used were:

- I came a great distance/short distance to get here.
- I like western rock music a lot/not at all.
- I have a lot of experience/no experience with working with action techniques.
- I am generally comfortable/uncomfortable in a new group.

Locograms show a choice or preference of group members among three or more possibilities. *Locograms* are constructed by indicating a location for each choice by using an object (chair, scarf, *etc.*) Sometimes we label each location on a piece of paper to help the group members remember which location stands for which choice. Participants may stand directly at one location, between several, or even remain in motion between two or more locations. A few examples of the *locograms* used were:

- My favorite time of day is: morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, night time.
- I live closest to: Denpasar, Sanur, Ubud, Jakarta, Surabaya, *etc.*
- I work with young people in: a school, a community organization, a Banjar (local community) youth group, a health setting, *etc.*
- The greatest challenge to me in working with youth is: the young people themselves, the parents, the setting in which I work, the community, *etc.*

Step-in sociometry has participants stand in a circle. They are invited to make a statement that is true for them, *e.g.* “I like working with older teens and young adults best.” Those who feel the same way as the speaker step into the circle as well.

As someone who has been facilitating these activities for decades I had forgotten how exciting they can be when encountered for the first time. Participants worked in small groups to practice facilitating and exploring ways that these activities could be used to build group cohesion, to help focus on commonalities in a group, to elicit possible group goals, and then assess how

well the group was meeting the goals. Several days after the workshop, one of the participants sent me photos of her using spectrograms in one of her groups.¹

The other major piece I introduced to this group was J.L. Moreno's concept of the Social/Cultural Atom (S/C Atom).

The S/C Atom is a map of the individual in relationship to the people (living and dead), organizations, cultural influences, *etc.* which impact on his/her life. It is generally drawn first on paper, and then may be put into action by having group members inhabit the various roles. It is a powerful tool for helping an individual explore their own sociometric connections and notice how relationships change over time.

Although often employed in therapeutic settings, one can use this tool in educational settings to enhance social/emotional learning and support students in gaining greater awareness of their interpersonal connections, both positive and negative.

Another use we explored was how a youth worker can gain insight into a student or member of a youth group, by stepping into the role of a particular youth and exploring that youth's S/C Atom. When we put the S/C Atom of a client of a youth worker from Jakarta into action, he discovered an important piece of information about how this youth had a much closer relationship with his drug dealer than with his father. This led the youth worker to realize that addiction was not the only issue for which this youth needed support.²

The workshop also utilized sociodrama and group discussion to explore the similarities and differences between various aspects of development for Indonesian adolescents at various ages and their counterparts in the USA and other western countries.

The group was divided into four subgroups representing early adolescence (from the onset of puberty to about thirteen years old), mid adolescence (from about thirteen to sixteen), late adolescence (from about sixteen to 19), and young adulthood (from about twenty to twenty-six; a period during which the final neural growth spurts of adolescence are reaching conclusion.) Each group presented a series of short scenes (sociodramas) showing how adolescents of their assigned age range relate to J.L. Moreno's *Universalia of Treatment*:

1 For a bi-lingual video (English and Indonesian) of a group of Indonesian Junior High School teachers learning these three techniques please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXUmdO5zSB8&t=30s> or go to YouTube and search for "Psychodrama Video: Intro to Sociometry Techniques."

2 For bi-lingual videos (English and Indonesian) of a group of Indonesian Junior High School teachers learning to conduct and evaluate a Social/Cultural Atom please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uzi4T1uZPk&t=8s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TU6EQ-ELGa4&t=81s> or go to YouTube and search for "Psychodrama Video: The Social/Cultural Atom" and "Psychodrama Video: Working with The Social Atom."

Time, Space, Reality and Cosmos. This provided a foundation for exploring the differences between adolescent perception and adult perception, which led to small- and full-group discussion of the ways in which this understanding is useful within educational settings.

Scenes about *Time* demonstrated the phenomenon that the passage of time tends to be perceived as much slower for younger individuals, for whom a year is a significant percentage of their lives. This was quite similar to what one finds with western youth. Three months is perceived as a long-term relationship and having to wait for a week for something feels like forever.

Scenes about *Space* demonstrated a seemingly reduced need for personal space for Indonesian youth from both their western as well as adult Indonesian counterparts. Considering living situations which tend to be multi-generational with little personal space for children who often share a bed as well as a room, this was not surprising.

Reality scenes were similar to those I have seen presented by youth-worker groups in the USA; namely that the reality experienced by youth is both more subjective as well as more influenced by the perception of peers than for adults. That which adults see as misrepresentation or outright lying may often just be a skewed perspective on events, colored by strong emotional reactions.

The scenes focused on *Cosmos*, or the trans-personal awareness of youth, demonstrated a much greater connection to both an individual and collective expression of the spiritual in daily life than is generally true for most western youth. This was not surprising, given the degree to which Hindu and Muslim youth in Indonesia participate in family and community religious practices and ceremony that is significantly more a daily than once-a-week occurrence.

For a more thorough exploration of the relationship of adolescents to these four *Universals*, the interested reader is referred to Chapter One of *Rebels With a Cause: Working with Adolescents Using Action Techniques*.³

Following this activity, each of the sub-groups then reviewed a series of statements that tend to be true for western adolescents at each stage of development. These statements were further sub-divided into: physical, mental, emotional, personal (*i.e.* related to the emerging personality), and social development. Each group was asked to reflect on the statements and consider which of them also held true for Indonesian youth.

The interesting outcome of this activity was a consensus that physical and mental development were quite similar for both western and Indonesian youth, but that elements of emotional, personal, and social development occurred a

3 Cossa, 1996, Jessica Kingsley Press, London

bit later for Indonesian youth, especially for those from Bali whose life experience tended to be in a more collective environment (as mentioned earlier) than their western counterparts.

The Campuhan College Project – First Year

The workshop for youth workers led to a series of seven, action-focused group sessions that I co-led with some of the Campuhan College school staff over a period of seven weeks during March and April of 2016. These groups ended shortly before the students went off to engage in off-site, work practicum experiences, prior to their return shortly before graduation.

Finding the right language that could translate easily into Indonesian was one challenge that we addressed. It led to the use of the term “Motivational Arts” to describe action methods, and the *Circle of Your Life* to describe the Social/Cultural Atom. In translation it made more sense, and also allowed us to use the song from Disney’s *The Lion King* as part of the introduction to the activities.

During that seven-session program we used the *Circle of Your Life* to explore the changes in interpersonal and cultural connections as students moved from a very community-focused life (living in their multi-generational family compounds) to developing more independence while at school. Change was dramatically evident between the depictions drawn by students to represent their lives before Campuhan (labeled *Past*), and the ones drawn to represent the time after seven months as students (labeled *Present*).

The *Present Circles* included the many important relationships that had been made among the students and between students and staff at Campuhan College. Additionally, the *Past Circles* tended to show little or no space between the student (represented by a circle for females and a triangle for males) and those surrounding them. (See Figure 2 for an example.)

The *Circles of Life* were put into action, with fellow students playing the various, roles and conversations enacted between the *Protagonist* (the person whose *Circle* was being enacted) and the people and other elements in their life. During this process we discovered that an increased sense of individual identity and claiming of personal space had developed, without diminishing the importance of the relationship to family and cultural values.

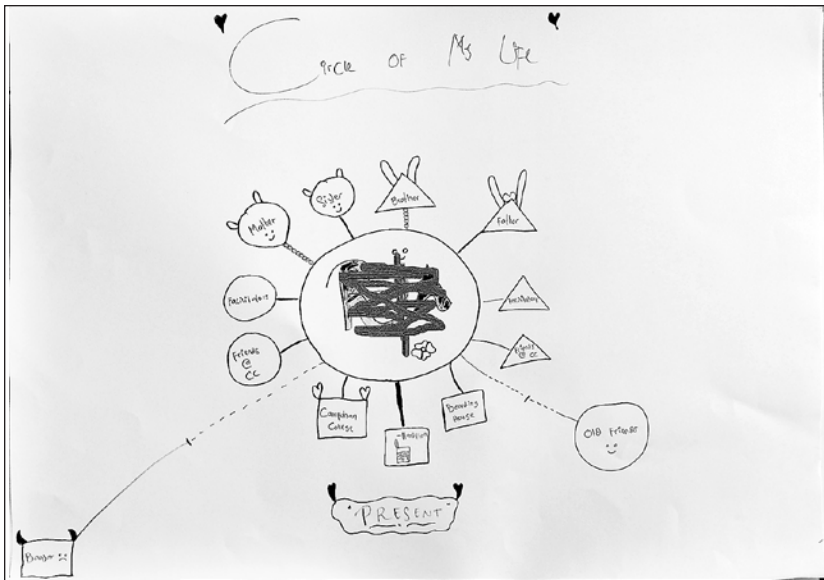
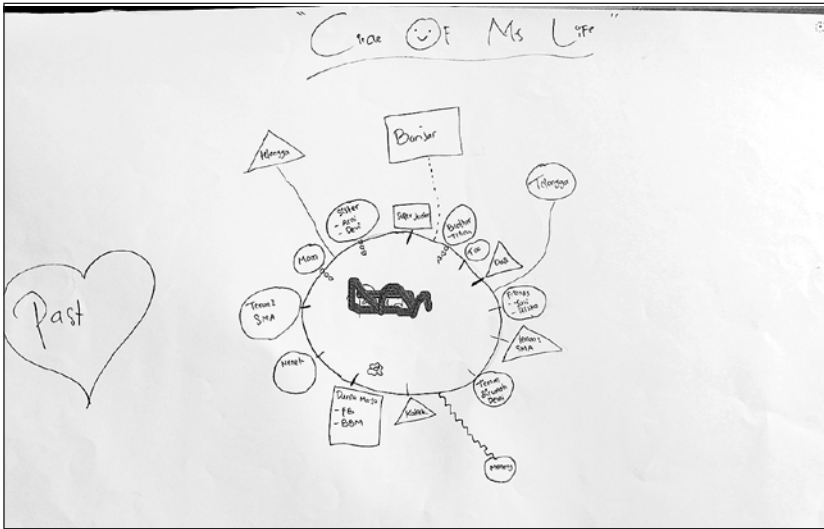


Figure 2 — A comparison of the Circle of Life before coming to Campuhan College (above), with the Circle of Life after being in the program for seven months (below). Name is obscured for confidentiality.

A particularly poignant moment during an enactment was with a young woman whose father had died when she was very young. He still was placed in a significantly close position in her *Circle*. During her enactment, which was one of the first, students were still giggling a bit as their classmates were selected to portray various roles.

Before asking her to pick someone to portray her father I shared with the group members that when we depict someone who is no longer alive, we are inviting their spirit to join us in the room to provide support and guidance. In that moment the tenor of the room went from that of somewhat uncomfortable giddiness, to genuine reverence. When the young man she selected to play her father stepped into the role, she embraced him and began to weep. Her tears were joined by those of most of the others in the room, both students and staff. This occurrence was certainly underscored by the Hindu connection to the sacred reality of the spirits of ancestors.

As we neared our final session we used Sociodrama to assist the students in exploring how they might integrate their family and cultural values with the more contemporary influences of technology and school. After a session in which students created their *Possible Future* Circles, we conducted a sociodrama in which the students were divided into seven different roles with about three students in each role. The roles were: the Campuhan College graduate about to leave for university in the USA, the members of their family, their ancestors, their friends from home, members of the Campuhan *family*, the Internet and world-wide-web, and social networking media.

During the drama the departing student received the blessings and advice from family and ancestors (the latter during a dream encounter), bid farewell to friends from home and from school, got some words of advice about not overusing from the world wide web, and then went off to face challenges at university.

During an encounter with *Surfer Dude*, played by the director of the drama, the student was being encouraged to spend a weekend before a major exam on a surfing holiday. The student was in a quandary, wanting to do well on the exam, but also wanting to build new relationships with American fellow students.

The trio playing the role of the student decided to use social media to connect with fellow students from Campuhan for advice. The conversation led to the decision to suggest to *Surfer Dude* that they postpone the surfing holiday until spring break. This character made a cameo appearance later in the drama when the student, now a university graduate and managing a hotel in Jakarta, had to tell family about having to work and not return home for one of the important Hindu holidays.

As I worked with the students during this first program year I was also training staff, who then could take over facilitation of many of the regular, group-session activities, as well as facilitating small groups using their native language to guide various action-based activities that I first demonstrated using an interpreter. Students and staff alike looked forward to our group sessions and participated with enthusiasm, honesty, and openly shared feelings. The closing session ran over time by a significant amount as appreciations were

shared, and tears and laughter were both part of the celebration of the time we had had as a group.

The Campuhan College Project – Second Year

During the following year it was decided to hold monthly sessions over the entire school year. They began on the first day for the incoming students. In addition to working with the *Circle of Your Life* with the students, I met with staff before each session to discover concerns and how students were progressing since I had last worked with them. We would then co-create an outline for the coming session that could address concerns and reflect on where the students were at that point in their experience of the program.

One concern that was addressed using sociometric exploration was the tendency of the students to form into sub-groups or cliques that in some ways excluded those not part of the group. We created an *Action Sociogram* (a depiction of the various sub-groups created by having people cluster with those to whom they felt the most solid connection) and invited members of each group to celebrate and appreciate each other. Then we invited them to partner with someone from one of the other groups and spend time getting to know each other. This activity helped build new connections within the student body and developed a greater awareness that connections within a preferred group did not have to exclude the possible richness of knowing people from other groups.

One of the significant and original extensions of *the Circle of Life* that came out of working with the class of 2017, was the creation of *the Circle of Values*, a way of mapping the values that were part of the students' lives before coming to Campuhan, and exploring the ways those values were changing and growing as well.

The process began with a paper and pencil rendering of the students' reflection on the values that were important in their lives prior to their coming to Campuhan. In *the Circle of Life* one might indicate specific family members and specific friends. In *the Circle of Values* one would indicate the value of *Family Connection* or *Friendship*. As with the traditional *Circle (S/C Atom)*, distance from the shape on the page that indicates self is an indication of how important these values are or were to the individual.

After completing *the Circle of Values* for the *Past*, students then completed their *Present Circle of Values*. I then demonstrated the process for taking these charts and putting them into action. I used a staff member, who was also a member of the original graduating class from Campuhan in 2008 for this demonstration.

Since we would be working in small groups of four, I had her select three colleagues to represent the three most important values she held before she became a student at Campuhan and arrange them in a sculpture around herself indicating the importance of each value by the distance that it was placed. Next

came the opportunity to dialog with each of the values to explore further their importance to her as well as their origin in her life.

This was followed by a similar process for the three most important values in her life after having been a student in the Campuhan program. We then could explore how some values were still present but their position had changed, and how other values had emerged that were not present in the past.

After completing the demonstration, the students broke into their small groups, each with a Balinese facilitator and took turns exploring *the Circle of Values* in action and in their own language. For some, this meant using Balinese, instead of Indonesian. Although Indonesian is the official language of the country, most young people also speak the language of their island, which is different in many ways from Indonesian. Family members, especially older one, often do not speak Indonesian, or only in a limited manner, so Balinese may be the language of home and family.

One of the challenges in working in other cultures is to recognize the language differences and complexities that often do not translate directly from and to English. Having good interpreters is a must. Even with groups who are comfortable and conversant in English, it is generally important to conduct activities in the first language, as this allows a greater richness of meaning and expression of feeling.

Another challenge in working in the Balinese cultural environment is how to support students in developing roles for success in a modern world without losing the importance of their ancestral traditions and values. This application of *the Circle of Values* and the sociodramatic (group-focused) and psychodramatic (individual-focused) exploration that ensued really helped students meet this challenge. A similar sociodrama to the one described for the class of 2016 was also conducted as a culminating activity for this class, but the roles tended more to focus on the values expressed by the various character clusters.⁴

Although psychodrama and sociometry are often imagined to be used only in therapeutic capacities, they have enormous potential for use in education. It is exciting and challenging to be bringing these methodologies to Indonesia. I am indebted to my many trainers and colleagues in the field who have prepared me for this important task.

4 For a bi-lingual video (English and Indonesian) of the Campuhan College session during which the Circle of Values was first explored, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxzFEtMPWQo&t=73s> or go to YouTube and search for “Sampler of Motivational Arts at Campuhan College.” The video demonstrates the ease with which the Balinese teachers have learned to facilitate these action techniques and the enthusiasm with which the students participate in them. The video also includes brief interviews with several students who relate their experience of participating in these group sessions.

Mario Cossa

Mario Cossa is a Psychodramatist (Certified Trainer, Educator, Practitioner [TEP] by the American Board of Examiners), Drama Therapist/Master Teacher (RDT/MT, Certified by the North American Drama Therapy Association), and Theatre Educator who has traveled globally offering trainings, retreats, and workshops in the USA, Canada, the UK, South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and China. His primary trainer in psychodrama was Zerka Moreno and he is ever influenced and inspired by her work and passion.

He is a Trainer in the Therapeutic Spiral Model™ for the safe utilization of psychodrama with survivors of trauma and for using action methods to enhance post-traumatic growth. It was through Therapeutic Spiral International that Mario first became a figure on the international psychodrama scene.

Mario believes passionately in the ability of the Creative and Performing Arts to expand consciousness and to transform lives. He lives primarily in Bali, Indonesia, and has offered trainings for Indonesian youth workers for a number of years. His chapter in this volume is a testament to the living nature of psychodrama and the way in which its theories and methods impact other cultures and are, in turn, impacted by them.

For additional information or questions, please contact Mario at mario@dramario.net or visit www.dramario.net

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