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Sociodrama

By

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Sociodrama concerns itself with the role aspects that people share. For example, all students are expected to study; most nurses encounter dying patients in the course of their careers; most charter boat captains encounter rough seas at some points; all employees have bosses with whom they must deal. Jacob Levy Moreno, M.D., originated sociodrama between 1921 and 1923. One of the reasons that sociodrama works so well is that Moreno was able to tap into the truth about humanity that we are each more alike than we are different.

In *Who Shall Survive?* Moreno said, “The true subject of sociodrama is the group. . . . Sociodrama is based upon the tacit assumption that the group formed by the audience is already organized by the social and cultural roles which in some degree all the carriers of the culture share. . . . The sociodramatic approach deals with social problems and aims at social catharsis.” (59-60)

Basing itself on the premise of shared experience, a sociodrama group might seek to define a problem members would like to solve. If they’re social workers, they might want to be better able to deal with a situation in which family members disown a child’s misbehavior at school.

The members may find a situation in which they would like to gain greater understanding. If they’re police trainees, they may want to learn to understand a rape victim’s feelings. The members might define a decision which they would like to be able to make; for example, high school students wanting to decide whether or not to go away to school rather than live at home and commute to school.

Members may seek to train themselves in certain role aspects about which they may feel uncomfortable. Thus, if they're a group of the hard-core unemployed, the members may want to role-train interview decorum.

Sociodrama is an action method in which individuals enact an agreed upon social situation spontaneously. The participants volunteer or are assigned roles by the director of the sociodrama. After every enactment there is a sharing in which group members discuss the enactment; the solutions or ideas it presented, and sometimes generate new materials for future sociodramatic clarifications. The sharing is a time to begin the process of cooling down and integrating what has taken place moments before in action. Sociodrama, with its action/reflection components, speaks to both sides of the brain. It is a kinesthetic, intuitive, and cognitive educational technique.

Unlike simple role-playing, sociodrama employs many specific techniques to deepen the action of the enactment. Some of these are the aside, doubling, role reversal, soliloquy, mirroring. It is important to mention that theatrical training and/or interest in theatre are unnecessary for sociodrama. The modality is not meant to train actors but rather to draw on a person's innate need and ability to learn with his whole body, mind, and intuition.

GENESIS

Moreno was born in Bucharest, Roumania in 1889. As a small child, his parents moved their family to Vienna. As a young man, Moreno took a degree in philosophy, then received his MD from the University of Vienna. Throughout the time when he was a student he was developing the ideas that ultimately blossomed into sociodrama. Between the years of 1908 and 1911, Moreno experimented with dramatic play in the parks of Vienna. He would gather children round him, tell them tales from fairy tales and the theatre and then enact the tales with

the children. After a while, he encouraged the children to invent stories from their own imaginations to enact. As he watched children take on and practice roles from the culture and work through their issues via play, Moreno started to hypothesize about roles and the educational and therapeutic benefits of role playing.

In 1913, when he was a medical student, Moreno began to explore the sociodynamics of groups. Moreno met a prostitute one day on the Praeterstrasse. Because she was away from the red light district and wearing gaily-colored clothing rather than the more sedate apparel of a proper lady, a policeman carted her off to jail. Moreno, rather stunned by this occurrence, searched out the woman when she was released and discovered from her that prostitutes had no rights under the law and were further not entitled to public medical care. Ever the social activist, Moreno interested a newspaper editor in the women's plight, got them medical care and organized the women into a kind of guild of prostitutes. The ladies met weekly to discuss their concerns. Moreno dates these groups as the inception of group psychotherapy.

As he observed the women and what they discussed, he began to realize what makes groups work: that we are more alike than we are different. He noticed that for every role a person plays there are both collective and private aspects. The prostitutes were able to communicate with each other so well because they shared difficulties and joys that were role related. They all had to worry about aging, pregnancy, and venereal disease. These are some of the collective role aspects. At the same time, each prostitute had her own personality, personal concerns, and way of playing the role. These are the private aspects of the role.

Between the years of 1921 and 1923 Moreno developed and ran the Theater of Spontaneity. He loved theatre but was put off by the theatre of his day because he felt it had become sterile. He felt the actors and plays didn't reach the community the way the theatre of the ancient Greeks did. Moreno believed that there should be Interaction between audience and actors. Further, he

believed that the theatre was lifeless because it didn't explore issues that were of vital importance to the general public.

Moreno gathered together a group of professional actors and trained them both in spontaneity work and as sociological researchers. He wanted them to be actively aware of the current issues of their culture so that audience members could mention a current event and the actors and audience could explore that issue onstage. As enactors and audience joined together spontaneously to examine social problems and discover possible solutions to them, sociodrama was born.

Moreno came to the USA in 1925. He had been invited to come here to develop a prototype of the tape recorder that he and a friend had invented. Once in the US, Moreno worked using threads of sociodrama with children in NY schools and with racial issues in Harlem.

In the years from 1929 –1931, Moreno again created a theater company called the Impromptu Theater and began experiments with his actors in developing the Living Newspaper format. They performed in New York City at Carnegie Hall. Audience members were encouraged to come up on stage and interact with the actors. Moreno abandoned the Impromptu Theater when, as part of WPA, the company expanded to include playwrights. Moreno felt that playwrighting was an anathema to spontaneity and interaction between audience and actor.

Since Moreno's initial creation of sociodrama, role-play has developed as an offshoot and is a standard part of many forms of training in business and education. Role-play enjoys wide usage because it is quite easy to do and doesn't require much training. It differs from sociodrama in that it doesn't utilize the many techniques of sociodrama that widen and deepen the scope of the action and that provide for a more profound learning experience. Simulation games also have their roots in sociodrama.

Sociodrama itself has developed primarily in terms of specific techniques and broadening its use with many and varied populations to fulfill Moreno's idea of healing all of mankind. At present, sociodrama is utilized in education, business and industry, psychotherapy, religion and spirituality, and theatre.

DRAMA THERAPY FRAME OF REFERENCE

Basic Concepts

Spontaneity

Moreno believed that each of us is potentially a spontaneous, creative genius. He said that rather than focus on the worst aspects of human behavior, we should instead study the geniuses, artists, inventors and saints, those who achieve the highest of what it means to be human. Through this examination, social scientists could discover what the rest of us can do to develop ourselves as fully as possible. Thus, Moreno did not follow the medical model in relation to human growth, development, function and dysfunction. He believed that each of us is a work in progress and that psychotherapy and sociotherapy are methods for assisting people in their personal evolution.

In *The Future of Man's World*, he said, "Man must take his own fate and the fate of the universe in hand, on the level of creativity, as a creator. It is not sufficient if he tries to meet the situation by technical control – defense weapons – nor by political controls – world government – he should face himself and his society in *statu nascendi* and learn how to control the robot not after it is delivered, but before it is conceived (creatocracy) . . . The future of man depends upon counterweapons developed by sociometry and sociatry." (21)

Moreno's Role Theory

Moreno began looking at roles and role relationships as early as 1913 in his work with prostitutes in Vienna. He developed his role theory which serves as the basis for using sociodrama. He defined role this way: "Role can be defined as the actual and tangible forms which the self takes. We thus define the role as the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved. The symbolic representation of this functioning form, perceived by the individual and others, is called the role. The form is created by past experiences and the cultural patterns of the society in which the individual lives, and may be satisfied by the specific type of his productivity. Every role is a fusion of private and collective elements. Every role has two sides, a private and a collective side (as quoted in Fox, *The Essential Moreno*, 62).

Role is a unit of behaviors that reflect socially agreed upon boundaries. These behaviors clustered together create the broader category called role. Roles are important to us as a society, since we often identify people by the roles they play. For example if a person says, "Betty is a secretary." We have a pretty clear idea of that role. We may ask for more details as to what Betty's specific job is as a secretary, but her role is clearly understood.

When we identify the people we know, it is difficult to come up with any meaningful description of the person without considering his or her behavior. If I say, "Linda is a workaholic." What do I mean? Did that label come out of the blue? No, every time I see Linda she is busy with at least two or three projects going at once. She is frequently called upon by others and is always willing to take on another task to help someone else. Her actions tell a lot about her personality. Looking at the roles others play, as well as those we ourselves play goes a long way to help us understand ourselves.

Each of us plays many roles in our lives. Moreno pointed out that each role a person plays has two parts to it: a collective component and a private component. The collective component

of the role is the common denominator or aspects of the role that are similar to all that play it. For example, Jack, Tom, and Barry are all police officers. All of them arrest suspects; all are proficient in the use of fire arms; and all have concerns about being injured on duty. It is easy for them to converse with each other because they have the same frame of reference in role. However, sooner or later they will probably begin discussing their own experiences. When that happens, they are moving from the collective to the private role components. It is the private component that distinguishes us in our own personal way. For example, Tom may work out of the 18th precinct and work on the beat, while the others work on the 20th precinct and ride in a patrol car. Jack especially likes lecturing kids in grammar schools on safety, while Barry feels he has a gift for intervening in domestic disputes.

Moreno felt, as the authors do, that as individuals we have much more in common than we have different. Beginning with those commonalities, or collective role components, group members can find a common ground on which to interact. Sociodrama emerges from that focus and explores in action aspects of our collective components. The focus of sociodrama is the group and the common threads of their concerns.

He further categorized roles into three types: the psychosomatic, the social, and the psychodramatic, or intrapsychic roles. The psychosomatic roles come first. Those are the physical roles that we see in newborn infants and continue in us throughout life, e.g., the eater, the crier, the eliminator. From there we add the psychodramatic and social roles. Moreno labeled the psychosomatic to indicate a psychological connection with bodily functions. If a lightning flash frightens a child, he may cry out in fear. The crying out is a physical manifestation, while the response of fear is an emotional one.

Moreno noted that newborns are unable to differentiate between themselves and others. He felt that infants don't know where mother or father begins and they themselves end. The

newborn is the center of his universe, experiencing himself as one with everything else in existence. In fact, Moreno termed this state the First Universe.

As the child interacts with those around him, he begins to develop social roles and an imaginary life that is independent of reality. At about two and a half, the child becomes aware of himself as a separate being. Moreno called this phase the Second Universe. The I and thou are totally separate, and illusion and reality are recognized as two different phenomena.

Social roles come from our interaction with others: mother, father, doctor. The first social roles emerge slowly from our interaction with others. The baby cries and the mother feeds him. The toddler smiles and the father plays with him. This action and response continues as we develop a sense of role reciprocity.

Psychodramatic roles are interior roles, such as the loner, the planner, the humorist. Among our psychodramatic roles are those which we play in our fantasy lives: the super hero, the rock star, the ruler of a new nation. These roles are important in our lives. We can imagine those roles and some perhaps are roles we would like to perform in the future.

Moreno noted that we are warmed up to different types of roles at different times in our lives. That realization can be important to the sociodrama leader. At times people may be warmed up to psychodramatic roles rather than social roles. For example, the planner may be deeply involved with his next project, listening to his own inner dialogue and not listening to what his fellow group member is saying. At times like this the leader can address those psychodramatic roles and bring the members back to group interaction by asking them to discuss what happens when distractions prevent them from focusing on what is occurring in the here and now. From this discussion a drama may emerge on managing distractions or scheduling time to devote to planning.

According to Moreno there are three ways of assuming roles: Role taking, Role playing, and role creating. *Role taking* is the most rigid or a routine form. When someone role takes, he follows the parameters of a role exactly as the culture established it with little or no deviation. *Role playing* offers a greater degree of freedom and responsibility and implies comfort in role enactment.

Finally, *Role creating* offers the highest degree of spontaneity and creativity. When a person role creates, she adds something new to that role or creates a totally different version of the role. For example, if one were to take the role of a substitute teacher, that teacher would follow the syllabus given to him verbatim. (Role taking). If he were role playing, he might switch the first topic on the syllabus to the third or add an item for discussion that was not included on the syllabus. (Role playing) However, if he were role creating, he might decide to forget the syllabus entirely and take the class in an entirely new direction with the material. (Role creating)

Every role that we play has aspects of all three: role taking, role playing and role creating. When we learn a new role we usually begin with role taking. As we learn the role more thoroughly and become comfortable in it, we move to role playing, and finally when we see a new way to perform that role, we move to role creating. The understanding of how we engage in various stages of role development can help us find satisfaction in what we do well and spark us to try new ways. (Role creation) Through sociodrama we can explore the various roles we play and experiment with others. We can examine and practice ways to play our life roles with greater flexibility and tap into our inner creativity in dealing with our own lives.

Sociometry

Sociometry is the measurement of social choices. Throughout our lives we constantly make choices, choices that join us with one person or group and choices that separate us. Some of our

choices are visible to others, such as which social club or community action group we belong to, or with what group of friends we spend time., Other choices may be invisible to other people such as who our favorite co-worker is or what political party we vote for.

Moreno was fascinated by this constant choice making that goes on around us all the time. He was even more intrigued by visible and invisible networks of choice, connection and rejection. He noticed that a person has his own individual criteria for choosing, rejecting or remaining neutral to another person. Moreno developed the science of sociometry to study the circumstances and reasoning that motivated social choice. He further saw sociometry as an opportunity for providing direction in making positive changes in the future based upon what was uncovered through sociometric examination. In *Who Shall Survive?* Moreno says, "Sociometry deals with the mathematical study of psychological properties of populations, the experimental technique of and the results obtained by application of quantitative methods. This is undertaken through methods that inquire into the evolution and organization of groups and the position of individuals within them." (51)

Moreno developed several measuring instruments as methods to map social choices and interrelationships among people, including the *sociogram*, the social barometer, the spectrogram and the social atom. The sociogram is a graphic representation of the social choices a group has made based upon a particular criterion. For example, a group may be asked, "With whom in the group do you have the most in common?" The sociogram can be written down or offered as an action sociogram. The director asks the group hypothetical questions such as, "Who would you like to accompany you mountain climbing? Who would you ask to help you pick out a wedding present for your fiancée? Whom would you seek out to assist you in setting up a co-operative day care center?"

The action *spectrogram* is a sociometric device that measures what people "like most" and "like least." It gives the leader and the group a reading of the group's tenor of feeling at a given time. When administering it in action, one end of the room represents "likes most" and the other end represents "like least." One is to imagine there is a line on the floor that goes from one end of the continuum to the other. The area in between represents gradations of the feelings between the two poles. In a group devoted to exploring the ramifications of technology in everyday life, the director might ask the group questions like. "How do you feel about using cell phones in restaurants or while driving?"

A variation of the spectrogram is the *social barometer*. This technique focuses on the group's feelings regarding social issues. Once again the continuum line is used, but this time one end represents, "Pro or Yes" while the other end represents "Con or No." Again, the director calls out questions but this time the questions are about social issues. For example, "How do you feel about prayer in the schools? Or welfare rights for non-citizens?"

In observing the interaction in the group and listening for the issues, the sociodrama director routinely employs sociometry. She encourages participation from all members of the group and values all contributions to the discussion. Group members see where others stand on certain issues, and lively discussions begin. Each of these sociometric devices mentioned above can serve as an excellent warm-up for a group. From there it becomes obvious which issues the group is clearly warmed up to and what it is they want to explore in a sociodrama. Sociometric connections build through the enactment and continue to strengthen in the sharing segment of the group experience.

Theory of Spontaneity and Creativity

Moreno developed a theory of spontaneity and creativity that underlies the practice of sociodrama, the spontaneous enactment of group concerns. He termed creativity the arch substance and spontaneity the arch catalyst (**citation**). Creativity is the germ of the idea, and spontaneity is the get up and go that impels us to actualize the idea and give it life outside the mind. In *Who Shall Survive?* Moreno postulated that, “There were many more Beethovens born than the one who created the sonatas. However, although they may have had the ideas for a symphony, they didn’t have the spontaneity to actualize the idea.”(39) Thus, spontaneity and creativity are partners in moving us through life. When only one of them is operating, we become stuck. We either have the idea with no push to bring it to action or we are ready to move but can’t think what to do. Sociodrama helps people to marshal the forces of spontaneity and creativity to utilize those partners in solving problems and finding new ways to play roles and view situations.

Moreno hypothesized that warm-up and cool down were necessary functions in life. In the morning, the alarm clock rings. As we wake up, we warm up to getting out of bed and begin a longer warm-up to our day by performing our daily routines. Many of us don’t like it when our warm-up is broken by outside circumstances, as when we reach for the coffee in the cupboard, there is none left, and we need that coffee to wake up.

Throughout the day we warm-up to various activities and cool down from those activities when they are ended. Moreno found the warming up process to be integral to the spontaneity-creativity cycle. If either our spontaneity or creativity is blocked, we need to warm up to it. For example, say that a group is questioning how to manage anger. If they have had difficulties with anger management and have become explosive when angry, they may need to warm up to the

desire (spontaneity) to handle the situation differently or they may need to generate ideas (creativity) for how to manage their anger differently.

People's reluctance in a group is viewed as connected with the warming up process rather than "resistance" to doing the work. In sociodrama the concept of resistance has no place. Moreno would instead say that the person's warm-up is inadequate. This view takes away the pejorative aspects inherent in the concept of resistance that implies a certain willfulness that may in fact be absent.

The sociodramatist evaluates function or dysfunction in individuals and groups through testing the sociometry of the group and individual. How does a person play the roles he plays? What degree of spontaneity and creativity does he display? How warmed up is he to the roles he plays? If he states he wants to make shifts in his behavior, how warmed up is he to doing this? What is the nature of his role relationships with others in the group? How do group members relate to each other in particular circumstances? What interferes with their warm-up if their warm-up is blocked? How warmed up are they to fulfilling the goals of the group?

The Sociodrama/Drama Therapy Interface

As the authors think about the similarities and differences between classic drama therapy and sociodrama, the similarities far outweigh the differences. In both, there is enactment of metaphorical, non-private materials. People are telling their personal stories through metaphor or role rather than directly playing out scenes from their lives. The enactments are issue focused. The sessions are structured to provide a warming up to action and a cooling down segment with feedback, processing and/or sharing from group members.

The primary differences, as far as we can tell, are the following. In sociodrama, many techniques have been developed to facilitate the goals of the group. In drama therapy, the

enactments employ more theatre-based interventions. For example, one aspect of classic drama therapy is the creation of scripted works and their theatrical production, whereas, in sociodrama, enactments are wholly spontaneous and not scripted. Over the years there has been much cross-fertilization between drama therapists, psychodramatists and sociodramatists, so that many drama therapists integrate sociodrama and psychodrama techniques into their work routinely.

The Sociodramatic Process

Every sociodrama session has three components: the *warm-up*, the *enactment*, and the *sharing*. The warm-up is the time when group members leave behind their extraneous concerns and focus on what is happening in the group at the time. During the warm up issues emerge that the group wishes to explore.

In *Psychodrama: First Volume*, Moreno says, “This ‘warming up’ process of an entire group to a re-experience of a perennial social problem unsolvable by conventional means, as newspaper reporting, books, pamphlets, social case work, interviews, religious sermons, and so forth, is opening new roads for social therapeutics. It is inherent in the method that all phases of the sociodrama, even the most technical preparatory steps are initiated *within* the group situation and not outside of it. As nothing whatsoever is left out from observation and action, everything which happens is available to research and analysis.”(361)

During the warm-up the director (leader of the session) is observing connections among group members and is facilitating the building of connections where they are absent. She is also making interventions to bring in isolated or underactive members. She is listening for issues to which the group is warming up so that she may facilitate the group’s exploring these issues later in action. She may help the group to move toward action by creating a structured warm-up or may facilitate group discussion of a topic brought up by a participant (unstructured warm-up).

In the course of the warm-up group members will decide what issue they wish to explore and will decide upon a situation that illuminates that issue. Members volunteer to play roles in the enactment and choose a setting for the first scene. Once this occurs, the session moves to the enactment stage.

The enactment is characterized by the action of the sociodrama. The director readies participants to play their roles by interviewing them in role. She may also ask group members to contribute suggestions as to how the role should be played. After the enactors have received this warm-up to the specific situation of the drama, they spontaneously interact.

During the enactment the director utilizes various techniques to assist the group in accomplishing its goals. If, for example, she feels the characters need to develop empathy, she may call for a role reversal. Or if she sees that several members of the group have suggestions for the enactors regarding how to solve a problem, she may freeze the action, ask the enactors if they would be open to suggestions, and facilitate the interaction between audience and enactors. If group members wish to rehearse behavior, they may take turns practicing in action, making corrections as they go along. Some examples of this would be a group of patients from a day treatment center practicing job interview skills, or a lower functioning population practicing how to give a compliment or make a request for service.

After the enactment is complete, the sharing begins. As the sharing begins, the director asks the enactors what they were feeling in the role and/or what they learned from playing the role. This serves as an opportunity for the enactors to de-role as well to integrate back into the group. During the sharing, group members may express what they felt watching the enactment. Then the director asks them to relate what they learned from the enactment, to make suggestions for further enactments or the testing of alternate solutions, and to share their own experiences regarding the issue. The sharing is **not** a time for criticizing the acting of the enactors in any

way, nor is it a time for claiming that the portrayal was not true to life. If the latter occurs, the director may first point out that there are many ways to deal with a situation. Perhaps, the dissenting person has a different way of doing so and would like to share it. This makes room for both the enactor's style of relating as well as that of the person criticizing his behavior.

Throughout the session the director's role is to assist in the group's warm up to each other and the issues emerging in the group. He must ensure a safe, non-judgmental environment where people can express their thoughts and feelings with impunity, and where they feel comfortable enough to risk new learning. It is up to him to facilitate conflict resolution if it emerges in the group and to help build positive connections among members. As the session draws to a close, he facilitates the cool-down of the group by helping members to first to share feelings. Then he helps them to share thoughts so that they may leave the room in a cognitive place rather than an raw, affective place.

Every sociodrama has three goals, catharsis, insight and role training. One or all three of these goals may be achieved through the enactment and/or sharing.

Catharsis –

The term *catharsis* comes from the ancient Greek theatre. Aristotle defined the term in his book, *Poetics*, as the purging of the emotions of fear and pity. He used the term to describe the emotions the audience feels when they watch Oedipus Rex blind himself for the sin of marrying his mother and murdering his father. In sociodrama catharsis can occur both with the enactors participating in the session as well as with the audience observing.

Everyone has felt the relief from releasing pent up emotions after a good cry. That feeling is catharsis in one of its most common forms. Another familiar form of catharsis is the belly laugh.

Sometimes catharsis comes as a surprise to the participants who are unaware of their feelings, or who are holding a tight rein on those emotions dealing with a certain issue. The opportunity to express these feelings spontaneously offers an immediate relief to those involved. It also provides opportunity for a better understanding of the specific emotions brought into play. Therefore, when an enactor expresses his emotions fully and achieves catharsis, he is freed to explore alternative solutions to the situation he faces.

Insight

Everyone has had that feeling of "Oh, now I understand!" In sociodrama that is the experience we call Insight. It is that "Aha!" moment, when you understand the full meaning behind what you said or someone else said to you. This new understanding usually gives us a different way of viewing or comprehending a problem. For example, a student comes to the director after a sociodrama in which he played the role of someone who was unheard and wouldn't hear the requests of his co-worker. He says, "Now, I know how my wife feels when I say I have to go out with the guys. We're not really communicating with each other." Prior to this, they had simply tried to convince each other that each was right in his or her request, but weren't really listening to what the other was saying and meaning. As a result of his insight, he reported that he was able to tell to his wife how he felt about spending time with the old gang who goes out on Friday nights. It had nothing to do with her or with looking for women. "It's a thing with the guys," he said. When he went on to explain, she understood his need to spend time with his old friends, and he came to understand her need for companionship. They compromised. Now, he takes her out to dinner one Friday every month.

Role Training -

Role training is a rehearsal for life situations that are to come. We are continually bombarded with "How to" messages, yet we know that "Experience is the best teacher."

We all practice role training in our heads. We say to ourselves, "I'll say this, then he'll answer with...Then I'll say. . . ." We all feel a need to try out new behaviors and practice our actions before we encounter new or unfamiliar situations. As we grew up, most of us have received informal role training in table manners from our parents or other concerned adults, as well as their particular cultural conditioning. Around the dinner table children practice the manners they will use outside the house. This is role training at its most basic level.

Moreno advocated role training as a way of providing an opportunity for people to try on new roles and situations in a safe environment. Since sociodrama recreates those feelings and emotional reactions that occur in real life situations, role training offers a way to practice a variety of behaviors to meet any given situation. With the help of other group members, trainees can receive feed back on which areas of their behavior is most effective, or which action solves the problem most effectively. They can replay their actions until they feel comfortable in their role and confident that they are ready to meet whatever challenges come their way. Simply put, role training offers a rehearsal for life situations, for the desired behavior or action one chooses.

Role training in sociodrama serves many purposes from rehearsing job interview techniques to dealing with a bomb threat in crisis intervention training. Most employee orientation classes use role training especially in those areas of the job where an employee has to deal with the public. Recognizing potential problems, difficult situations, and typical client questions can go a long way in creating confidence in the new employees as well as preparing them for possible problems that they may encounter.

While sociodrama can be and is used in psychotherapy, it can also be utilized in many other venues as was stated above. Moreno considered sociodrama to be more of a sociotherapeutic than a psychotherapeutic modality because sociodrama helps to heal the rifts between and among people not merely in the psychotherapy office but in other settings in the community as well. He

felt that as sociodrama focuses on group issues rather than personal ones, it can go just about anywhere with positive results.

Sociodrama Techniques

Sociodrama and psychodrama share techniques although there are some differences in their uses.

Role Reversal

The concept of role reversal derives from perhaps the most brilliant of Moreno's observations. He recognized that most humans over the age of seven are capable of figuratively putting themselves in someone else's shoes and imagining what the other feels like in a given situation. People do this inside their heads all the time and request that others do it, too: "Put yourself in my place. How do you think I feel?" What is especially noteworthy is that it occurred to Moreno that if one could reverse roles in one's mind and gain new understanding and empathy, much more could be gained by asking people to actually change physical places and their roles with each other.

As it turns out, the result of external role reversal (as opposed to that done in the mind) is profound. When an enactor reverses roles, he sees the world from the perspective of the other person. He can develop empathy and understanding. He can see himself as others see him. Routinely, after a sociodrama in which enactors have experienced role reversal, they report that they have gained new realizations, a broadening of understanding of others, a new compassion for others' behaviors and a new tolerance for others' viewpoints. They also say they were able to see a problem in a new light and from the perspective of the other role could generate new solutions.

When the director calls for a role reversal, two enactors switch places and exchange roles. This shift in space is essential to achieve the full benefits of the technique.

Enactor A says, "You never listen to me." The director says, "Reverse roles." After enactors A and B have reversed, the director instructs B to repeat the last line before the reversal. Enactor B (in A's role) says, "You never listen to me." This repetition of the last line is important because it picks up the action where it left off. It also offers the enactor who is speaking an anchoring in the new role. Further, it re-anchors the audience and reminds them that Enactor A is playing B's role and vice versa.

Some of the reasons a director will use role reversal are:

- To increase understanding
- To develop empathy
- To facilitate insight
- To shift perspective
- To help the enactor see self in role as others see him or her
- To facilitate cool-down if the enactor is over-heated in role
- To increase spontaneity

A director may call for role reversal many times in a sociodrama. It should be mentioned that at the end of an enactment, enactors must be back in their original roles.

The Double

The concept of the double also derives from Moreno's observation of the way the human mind works. There are many times in life when we are conversing with someone and saying one thing while feeling another. We tell our boss, "Sure I don't mind staying late at work tonight," when we feel, "I'm exhausted! This is the third time in two weeks he asked me to stay late."

How annoying!” Or we may say to our steady, “I really like you,” when we feel, “I love you and want a more committed relationship.”

Everyone has an inner voice. Moreno chose to invent a technique, the double, that is designed to externalize that voice so that everyone can hear it in a sociodrama. The double expresses the unexpressed thoughts and feelings of an enactor. The director or any member of the group can act as a double for an enactor. In order to double, the person doubling stands to the side of and slightly behind the enactor in the drama. The double speaks the unspoken, and the enactor repeats what was said if it correctly reflects her feelings or corrects it if the expression is inaccurate. Although everyone in the drama can hear what is said by the double, it is a sociodramatic convention that one responds solely to the enactor who has repeated or corrected the double’s statement. If you have several enactors and a few people doubling it becomes chaotic if everyone is responding to everyone else.

Sometimes a permanent double is assigned to an enactor as in a sociodrama about what a shy person experiences at a party where she doesn’t know anyone. Sometimes there are several permanent doubles who interact with the main enactor as in a sociodrama in which a student is torn between one part of him that wants to quit school and get a job; another part that wants him to stay in college; and another part of him that wants to move to another part of the country and live in the wilderness. Each of the enactors playing the interior roles would be a double.

The double has several functions. Here are some:

To offer support

To verbalize non-verbal gestures, movements, and sounds

To maximize the feelings expressed by the enactor

To question the self

To make self-observations

To provide sentence stems (“I feel –“) that the enactor can
complete as appropriate

Aside

This term comes directly from the theatre and is performed by an enactor in the same way that an actor in a play does it. When an enactor is thinking or feeling something which he wants to acknowledge but doesn’t want to say directly to the other person in the enactment, he turns to the side and speaks, often starting with, “I wouldn’t tell her this, but. . . .” The other enactor is to ignore the aside as if she never heard it being spoken.

Soliloquy

This term also comes from the theatre. The soliloquy is essentially a monologue in which an enactor speaks aloud his thoughts and feelings at some length. The soliloquy is sometimes used if the enactor seems confused, overwhelmed or stuck. The director may freeze the scene and ask him to step out of the scene for a moment and talk about how he is feeling and how he views what is happening in the drama. He may also ask the enactor to brainstorm aloud some solutions if the enactment is problem focused. After the soliloquy the protagonist returns to the drama. In a drama about a family in denial about the mother’s alcohol relapse, a teenager confronts the problem by challenging the mother about her drinking. An argument ensues with other family members supporting the mother and shouting down the teen. The director freezes the scene and takes each member of the family out of the drama one at a time to soliloquize about feelings and figure out what to do. After all soliloquies are complete, the action resumes.

Walk and Talk

In this technique, the director walks around the stage with the enactors one at a time and discusses with them the parameters of the roles they are to play. This helps the enactors to warm

up to the roles, to develop the roles and to discuss the issues of the drama as the group wishes to explore them. For example, the director may ask the enactor playing the new employee how glad she is to be working for the company and how she likes her co-workers. If the group defined the issue as how to cope with sexual harassment, he may also ask how she felt when her supervisor asked her out for a drink after work.

The walk and talk most often occurs at the beginning of a drama, but it can also occur in the middle of the drama if the enactor loses spontaneity and gets stuck. The director takes the person out of the scene and walks and talks with him about the situation. If the enactor wants assistance from the group, the director may ask audience members to make suggestions for handling the problem in the scene. If the enactor playing the new employee can't figure out how to deal with her supervisor's advances, she may walk and talk with the director, ask for and receive suggestions from the audience. When spontaneity is restored and she decides what she wants to do, she returns to the scene.

The walk and talk is also useful in conflict situations in which enactors are getting overheated. Freezing the action and taking the enactor out for a few minutes gives her a chance to cool down and think over the triggers for her highly charged emotional reaction as well as to find new and more satisfactory approaches to the situation.

Empty Chair

A chair is put before the group or an enactor and they are to imagine that someone or some quality is in the chair. Group members are then instructed to speak to whomever or whatever is occupying the chair. Let's say Benjamin Franklin is in the chair. The director may instruct the group to say something to him or to step in and occupy the chair for a moment and speak to the group from the role about what it was like to be a great inventor and great wit. One can also put an emotion in the chair (anger) or an abstraction (alcohol).

Freeze Frame

This term comes from film vocabulary meaning to stop the action on a single frame on the screen. In sociodrama there are times when we want to stop the action and view it as a tableau. The facilitator calls, “Freeze!” and the enactors do just that. This technique is used for a variety of situations. You may want to take an enactor out of the scene in order to use additional techniques such as soliloquy or walk and talk. Perhaps the structure of the action is lost because there are too many people in the scene all talking at once. You can freeze one area of the group and focus the action on another or you may call for a freeze and elicit audience reaction to the scene. “What do you see happening in this scene? What can they do to make things better?” Remind your audience that this is not a time to judge or analyze the acting of the participants but simply to observe and discuss the situation.

Concretization

A concretization is a literal portrayal of figurative or symbolic language or feelings. Often times the director notices a physical response to something that is occurring in the sociodrama and asks the enactor to concretize the feelings she is experiencing. For example, if in a sociodrama Maria says, “I feel like I’m being pulled in two different directions,” the director can ask two other enactors to each take hold of Maria’s arms and each pull her in their direction. Therefore, the statement of being pulled in two different directions becomes literally true and is made concrete with the action.

Sculpting

This term describes a living tableau scene. It is a kind of concretization of interrelationships. In a work-related sociodrama, Nick volunteers to be the manager, Sally says she will play his overworked secretary. Jerry will be the desk clerk and Donna volunteers to be his assistant, who feels she is experiencing gender discrimination from the manager. Each takes

a position in the tableau. As a further warm up for the enactors in their roles, the director asks each enactor to sculpt his co-workers in relation to themselves, placing each of the others in a position that symbolizes how they feel about the relationships. Donna places Nick very far away from her, while Nick places Donna on her knees next to Sally. Sally turns her back on them both, and Jerry places himself close to the manager.

Another use of sculpting is to stop the action when the enactors seem stuck or appear to have lost their spontaneity. The facilitator asks the enactor to sculpt the scene as it feels to him, or how he perceives the relationships or the emotional tone occurring in the scene. This technique works well for setting up the issue in a sociodrama.

Sculpting is also useful in setting up a sociodrama where internal voices are present: the studious self, the lazy self, the enthusiastic self, the stressed self. The enactors playing the internal roles can arrange themselves as they feel appropriate in relation to the role of the external person.

Mirror

The mirror is used to show the enactor how he looks and sounds to others. A player comes into the action and takes the enactor's place. He mirrors the enactor's verbal and nonverbal communication. The enactor steps out of the action and observes how the other player looks and sounds to others. This gives the enactor the opportunity to figure out what is going on in the situation and what he wants to do next.

Additionally, if the enactor displays an especially revealing body position, the director can take him out and ask for a volunteer to assume that posture. Ask the enactor what she observes and how she would interpret the body language. A word of caution when using this technique - direct the mirror to take the role of the enactor accurately and without stereotype, so that the enactor doesn't feel mocked or judged.

Future Projection

This technique takes the action to a future scene. This may be a scene in which the enactors play out their projection of what would happen if they were to continue on the same course in a conflictual situation or their fantasy of an ideal ending to the conflict. This gives them the opportunity to try out the scene the way they hope it will happen or wish for. It also offers the opportunity to play the scene in a way they fear it may happen, so they can respond in an appropriate manner.

For example, in a sociodrama regarding poor safety conditions in a work environment, Michael enacts a future projection in which he playfully approaches his boss about instituting the new safety rules in the workplace. He then returns to the present scene, and practices other methods of encountering his boss about his concerns. Although the final action ends the way Michael hopes for, he had to overcome several obstacles put in his path by the enactor playing the boss in order to make a case for the value of the new rules. In this instance, future projection stimulated role training.

Role of the Drama Therapist in Sociodrama

The role of the drama therapist is to direct the sociodrama session, insuring the safety of all members. She is responsible for creating a comfortable, non-judgmental environment in which members can feel free to express their thoughts and feelings openly. She needs to be cognizant of sociometry so that she can facilitate group process and move the group toward sociodramatic action that is group centered and non-personal.

Frequently, deep feelings emerge in relation to issues enacted. It is important for the director to remember that all emotions are role related and that it is appropriate for feelings to arise if the chosen issue is affect laden, as with euthanasia, abortion, and gun control. Ethically,

she needs to uphold the contract and not switch over to psychodrama just because the group members are expressing strong feelings.

The director is also responsible for helping the group achieve its stated goals. In addition to facilitating the action segment of the session she assists the group in the process of integration of learned material after the drama has ended.

When observing a skilled facilitator, the modality looks easy. The danger is that someone without training and sufficient knowledge of group dynamics and of her limits may inflict harm unwittingly on others.

Populations for Which Sociodrama is Best Suited

Because of the metaphorical nature of sociodrama it is suitable for virtually any group. What is wonderful about sociodrama is that it can go just about anywhere since the focus is on group issues and common concerns rather than one person's story. It is appropriate as a modality for business, schools, churches and synagogues, psychotherapy, and for the community, etc. It works well with both high and low functioning people, including the developmentally disabled, and people without vision, or hearing and those without speech or mobility (see the section on Case Examples).

Limitations, Challenges, and Growing Edge of This Approach

Sociodrama is by nature a group modality and is seldom done with individuals. At the other end of the spectrum it is challenging to find ways to manage extremely large groups in facilitating sociodrama. The logistics present a problem in mobilizing the entire group in an organized fashion.

It is our belief that the sociotherapeutic aspects of sociodrama will become particular areas of growth and study in the next decade. For example, sociodrama will become a staple intervention in conflict resolution programs. It will find greater usage in the training of trial lawyers, labor negotiators, managers and executives. More problem-solving skills groups will utilize sociodramatic techniques and more community-based groups will employ sociodrama to enhance positive connections among diverse elements of the population.

Sociodrama works in all kinds of milieus and with all kinds of people. The problem is that, like many other seemingly new things, people are often reluctant to try the unfamiliar, particularly if the word “drama” is part of the terminology. The question that arises is what practitioners will need to do to interest new populations in introducing sociodrama in their setting.

III. Case Examples

Goals of the Group

The goals of the group were to improve communications skills, promote patient interaction and venting, to train spontaneity, and to improve patient/patient and patient/staff relations.

Contents of the Sessions

At the first session, everyone was given a 4”x6” matte board name card and a choice of a colored felt tip pen. The leader asked the patients to choose a color that represented how they felt that day. Then she asked them to draw a picture or make lines or shapes that represented how they’d like to be seen by the group. There was space on the cards for a drawing. After the drawings were completed, the leader walked around the circle, showing the first, which was a flower. Some members responded with sounds, gestures, and showing of cards to indicate that they too had drawn flowers. Someone suggested arranging the flowers on the floor in a circle.

Next came abstracts; those were arranged as leaves. There were also human shapes, a tree and a butterfly to be fitted into the picture. Finally, the picture of a sun shone over all, and the group had begun the making of sociometric connections. To further feelings of connection, the leader asked the members to make gestures expressing how they felt. She asked the members to mirror the gestures. Later, members spontaneously added sounds to accompany the gestures and worked on changing the gestures and accompanying facial expressions to indicate various nuances of feeling.

In succeeding sessions patients continued to express, mirror and double each other's feelings. As was mentioned earlier, chronic aphasics are thought to be unable to learn sign language because of their difficulty in symbolizing language. Also, most of the patients in the group had use of only one hand. Some also had impaired body image as well. Thus, if the leader said, "Put your hand on your chest," the patient might touch his leg. Nevertheless, since patients did seem to be able to be expressive through gesture, the leader sought to devise simple signs which the patients could accomplish and which could be understood and responded to in the closed system of the hospital.

After teaching the patients a sign for, "How do you feel?" the group divided into dyads to ask the question of a person whom they wanted to know better. They took in their partner's response, mirrored it and represented their partner's response to the whole group when the group re-formed after the exercise. In later sessions, patients developed other signs to express feelings, (I'm sad; I'm happy); make somatic statements (I'm hungry; I'm sleepy), and finally developed a complete sign exchange: "Please give me a blanket which is over there. Thank you." Patients readily expressed negative as well as positive feelings and expressed relief at having an accepting forum for presenting themselves honestly in the moment.

Many of the sociodramas dealt with hospital issues. In every instance group members chose the subject for and parameters of the enactment: dealing with a noisy neighbor; making clear your need to use the lavatory and convincing staff to take you there; dealing with hospital administration relative to room changes; getting the love and support you need in a hospital. One, at holiday time, was a family meal sociodrama set in the past: patients enacted both a noisy family and a quiet family. One of the group's and the leader's favorite sociodramas took place when it was snowing outside. As everyone watched the ground grow whiter, people began to remember snowfalls of their childhood. The group decided to enact a drama about playing in the snow.

Sessions were held in a large space with large windows. All the patients were in wheelchairs. They designated one end of the room for the top of a hill. With wheelchairs as sleds and staff as wind to help push the sleds, the patients zoomed across the room, shouting, laughing, "talking" and holding on for dear life. They made snowballs and had a snowball fight and made a snowman. By the end of the sociodrama, their cheeks were as rosy as if they had actually been outside in the falling snow. What fun!

Throughout the group's life doubling was essential for adequate functioning. The leader and group members with any measure of speech would double in all segments of the session. The members without words would double nonverbally or through sound production. Those members who were doubled made very clear when they were doubled accurately and when they were not.

As the weeks went on, patients began to bring issues to the group that they wanted to work on. For example, the room change and family sociodramas were ones introduced by two patients who haltingly spoke and repeated, respectively, "Move me," and "Go home!"

During the last two of the seven weeks the group met, the members dealt with termination issues. They reviewed signs they had learned, expressed their feelings regarding what the group meant to them, what they had learned, what sociometric connections they had made, what surprised them about belonging to the group, what expectations were met and unmet and how the members felt about the group's concluding.

Conclusions

It was the evaluation of the staff and patients alike that the group had been useful in decreasing feelings of isolation among the patients. This was further evidenced by patients going out of their way to greet each other and wait for a response and by their gestures and sounds during sessions indicating that they felt the same as another patient in a given situation. This was in direct contrast to the beginning of the group life when patients related solely to staff one on one.

Staff and patients also noticed an increase in the repertoire of communication skills used by the patients. They also felt the sessions provided an opportunity for a safe and supportive environment in which to express feelings. This was further evidenced by both staff and patients, vocally and gesturally supporting the expression of each other's feelings.

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