Chapter 21

Conclusion—A Future Vision of Social Work with Moreno's Methods

Abstract This brief conclusion offers a new vision for the integration of Moreno's methods into the social work field. Moreno's triadic system, sociometry, psychodrama, and group psychotherapy, provides social workers with group work skills lacking in most social work curriculums but are essential for competent practice. This chapter is largely written in the form of a psychodramatic process which includes role reversing with a social work leader in the year 2074 at the 100th year anniversary of Jacob Moreno's death. This role reversal into an idealized future provides a reflection on how the social work field could benefit from the full integration of sociometry and psychodrama into its repertoire.

Keywords Future of psychodrama • Social work education • Social work field • Jacob Moreno • Psychodramatic letter

Mankind needs to be educated; education means more than intellectual enlightenment, it isn't emotional enlightenment, it isn't insight only, it is a matter of the deficiency of spontaneity to use the available intelligence and to mobilize his enlightened emotions... it requires action research and action methods continuously modified and sharpened to meet new inner and outer environments. (Moreno, 1947, p. 11)

Moreno's (1947) statement on education begs us to consider if social work education has been "sharpened to meet new inner and outer environments" and provide high-quality education for the next generation of social workers. Increasingly, social workers are expected to facilitate group therapy in clinical settings without the educational background or training necessary to work competently upon graduation (Goodman, Knight, & Khudodov, 2014; Knight, 2017; Sweifach & Heft-Laport, 2008). The reliance on social work education's cultural conserve may result in the gradual loss of potential clinical students to other graduate programs (counseling, psychology, marriage and family therapy, creative arts therapies, etc.) that provide a more comprehensive clinical education and training in group work. A recent study in Israel even found creative arts therapists demonstrate higher job satisfaction than psychologists or social workers but lack a sense of collective self-esteem that comes with belonging to a fully recognized profession (Orkibi, 2019). It is time that social work education responds to the needs of social work practice with groups more fully embedding experiential methods, group work, creative arts therapies, and trauma therapy within the social work curriculums.

Fig. 21.1 Intersecting elements of social work and Moreno's methods

The learning of Moreno's triadic system would provide social workers with the needed knowledge and skills to be successful in their careers which will inevitably include working with groups (Giacomucci, 2019). The publication of this book will concretize and further integrate Moreno's methods into the social work profession. As more professionals are introduced to psychodrama, there will be a greater interest in conducting quality research to strengthen its research base. While this book focused largely on clinical applications of Moreno's methods, it is important to note that psychodrama and sociometry processes are applicable in non-clinical settings as well. Moreno's methods can help prepare the current generation of social workers to provide the next generation with competent psychodrama supervision and education in the field placement and the classroom.

The primary goal of this publication is to initiate dialogue and integration between the field of social work, sociometry, and psychodrama (see Fig. 21.1). The first few chapters of this book oriented upon the histories of psychodrama and social work; therefore, it is only fitting that the final chapter concern itself with the future of social work and Moreno's methods. Considering the content of this book, it seems appropriate to conclude with a psychodramatic process. In the following psychodramatic letter writing experiment, I have attempted to role reverse with a social work leader in an idealized future where Moreno's methods have been fully integrated into the social work field. This is of course a biased future projection based on my own vision where psychodrama and social work exist in a synergistic union. Perhaps in the year 2074, we can look back and see if any of this vision has materialized!

21.1 An Idealized Future of Social Work and Psychodrama

Dear Readers,

Today, May 14th, 2074, marks the 100th year since the death of Jacob Moreno. On this anniversary, let us remember Moreno's contributions and celebrate how his legacy continues to live on. Moreno is remembered as many things including the founder of psychodrama and sociometry, a pioneer of group therapy and social network theory, and even "the man who brought laughter into psychiatry" as his tombstone reads.

Much has transpired in the past century as it relates to the evolution of Moreno's methods, and especially as it concerns us in the field of social work. About 50 years ago, social workers' interest in sociometry and psychodrama increased significantly due a realization of the need for more group work training and the outpouring of research on the effectiveness of body-oriented and creative arts therapies in the treatment of trauma-related issues. In the 2020s, an influx of new social work publications on Moreno's methods emerged with a special journal edition in *Social Work with Groups*. Psychodrama and sociometry found a home within the non-deliberative tradition of social work with groups. The larger movements in the social work field focused on social justice, trauma-informed work, strengths-based approaches, and emphasizing the creative arts modalities seemed to intersect at the point of sociometry and psychodrama.

I know it is hard to believe, but in the early 2000s, few social workers were trained in sociometry or psychodramatic methods and their existence was unknown to many. The psychodrama community, finding itself isolated from other professional fields, made an increased effort to collaborate with social workers—in addition to counselors, psychologists, educators, lawyers, coaches, and religious leaders.

In the early 2000s, the practices of social workers, counselors, and psychologists—as well as social group workers, group counselors, group psychologists, and group psychotherapists—had become almost identical. Social workers were losing their unique identity in group work. While working together with other professions is important, we also needed to differentiate ourselves as social workers and social group workers. The adoption of sociometric and psychodramatic philosophy, theory, and practices into our field helped us to distinguish ourselves from counselors and psychologists while remaining in integrity with our core values. The social work with groups field has been revitalized with an influx of new sociometric and psychodramatic ideas while also helping the psychodrama community to modernize and validate their methods. Social workers, utilizing their professional training in research and social justice, have developed new ways of using sociometry and psychodrama techniques which emphasize Moreno's vision of Sociatry while conforming to the standards of evidence based practice.

The field of psychodrama, which had largely failed to professionalize in the USA, integrated into academia with the help of many social workers. MSW concentrations in psychodrama sociatry developed in the 2030s, and later, a doctoral degree

in psychodrama and sociatry was established with CSWE accreditation. The psychodrama MSW concentrations helped to train social work practitioners as they entered the field using Moreno's methods while the doctoral program created scholars and researchers of Moreno's methods.

Social work educators regularly integrate experiential teaching components including sociometry and role-play into their social work courses which keep students actively engaged in the learning process. Many students are initially attracted to social work degree programs because they know they will not spend multiple years sitting through lectures or PowerPoint presentations, instead they will be active participants in the classroom. Rather than being treated as students, they are empowered to become student-instructors in the learning experience.

Sociometry and psychodrama have enhanced social work practice at the micro-, mezzo-, and macrolevels. Social work caseworkers now regularly employ the sociogram, social atom, and role atom tests as non-pathologizing assessment tools that emphasize our person-in-environment perspective. With these sociometric tools, we are now able to more fully work from a biopsychosocial–spiritual approach beginning with our assessments.

Social group workers, equipped with sociometry and psychodrama interventions, have mastered the art of working with the group-as-a-whole and cultivating mutual aid. In the past, we had been critiqued for doing individual therapy in group settings. Now, we fully integrate group methods to that produce both intrapsychic and interpersonal change while addressing psychodynamic and sociodynamic experience. It may be hard to believe, but years ago social workers could obtain an MSW degree without ever taking a course in group work. Since then, the CSWE requirements have changed and require group work training. Many agencies have come to prefer MSW interns over other interns due to the noticeable difference in their group facilitation competencies.

Many clients actively seek out clinical social workers for psychotherapy after finding talk therapy to be ineffective or unhelpful. Programs that work with young adults or people with addiction or trauma-related issues have come to prefer clinical social workers due to their use of experiential therapy and their clients' positive feedback regarding it. The neuroscience research supporting experiential methods for the treatment of trauma and other mental health conditions continues to pile up.

Macrosocial workers have incorporated the tools of sociometry and sociodrama into community social work practice. Rather than falling into the trap of becoming agents of social control, macroworkers center their work around the philosophy of empowering community members and advocating for social change. Sociodrama and role-playing techniques have become standard practice within community spaces to resolve intergroup conflict and role train community members to advocate on their own behalf. Sociometric tools and social network instruments are actively used to promote more democratic and inclusive organizations and societies.

Social workers employ experiential methods in their supervision of other social workers and in agency contexts. Staff meetings and supervision groups, which previously relied on group discussion or individual case presentations, now encompass experiential processes including sociometry and role-playing. Treatment teams

operate with more cohesion, connection, and collaboration than previously. The regular use of role reversal has helped social work supervisees better understand their clients' experiences when offering case presentations.

It is no secret that many of us choose the social work fields, or other helping professions, because of our own personal experiences with trauma, mental health issues, or oppression. Over the years, it became clearer that this was both a noble motivating factor but also the source of much countertransference, projection, and dysfunction in our field. The use of psychodramatic processes in social work education, supervision, training, and professional development seems to also have challenged emerging social workers to reflect on their own unresolved emotional issues and work through them. This has substantially improved the collective integrity of our field.

The social work core values have not changed, but we have systematically become better at embodying them and putting them into action within all areas of the field—education, training, supervision, clinical practice, casework, group work, community work, and organizational leadership. Social workers maintain committed to working with competency, integrity, service while emphasizing social justice, the importance of relationships, and the dignity and worth of every person. Morenean philosophy, theory, and practices have helped us to strengthen these axiological commitments and solidify our collective identity as social workers.

Though Dr. Moreno (see Fig. 21.2) never identified himself as a social worker, his career embodies that of one. He worked with oppressed and marginalized communities, groups, and individuals while creating larger societal changes which have had a lasting impact on society, education, group therapy, and social work. For this, we

Fig. 21.2 Jacob Moreno in 1942 in Chicago. Reprinted with permission from Figusch (2014)

recognize him as a pioneer of the social work field and honor him on the 100th anniversary of his death . Thank you.

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