

Part V

Sociometry and Psychodrama in Individual Social Work Practice

Social work practice, from its inception, placed considerable emphasis on individual casework. In the United States, it seems that clinical social workers have emerged as the largest group of mental health practitioners and regularly provide individual psychotherapy. While sociometry and psychodrama are primarily used in group settings, they are also applicable in a variety of individual social work settings. The field of sociometry offers various assessment tools which provide a more complete picture of the individual within their environment. The creative use of psychodramatic interventions initiates a dynamic experience in individual psychotherapy sessions. This section will outline the use of common interventions in individual settings, including the social atom, the role atom, timelines, psychodramatic letter writing, concretization, doubling, and psychodrama vignettes. It is important to note that while these interventions will be described in this chapter as they relate to individual sessions, they are each also applicable for group settings.

Historically, it is interesting to note that Jacob Moreno's first clinical use of psychodrama and role-playing was actually in individual work with a suicidal nobleman. One of Moreno's first professional roles after finishing medical school was as a doctor of a small Austrian town called Bad Vöslau. Moreno himself writes that the first psychodrama took place in 1921 at the Komediens Hall in Vienna, however in his autobiography he describes in detail a case from around the same time period in which he worked psychodramatically with a wealthy man who wanted help committing suicide. He depicts the various ways that he helped this man act out his suicidal fantasies over several weeks' time which eventually led to his commitment to life again (Moreno, 2019). Moreno also describes other patients that he used psychodrama with in individual settings, both with and without trained auxiliaries, including frequently with married couples in his early work (Figusch, 2009, 2019). Perhaps his most famous psychodrama in individual work was with at his psychiatric hospital with a patient who believed he was Adolf Hitler during World War II. With a team of auxiliaries, Moreno worked with the patient and helped him to act out his delusion of being Hitler. Through the psychodrama process and the sharing afterwards Moreno reports that the patient overcame his compulsion (Moreno, 1959).

Sociometry and psychodrama are almost always categorized as a group approach, but these cases remind us psychodrama's historical roots in individual work as well.

Moreno rarely wrote about the use of psychodrama in individual settings. In the few times that he does mention it, he usually comments on its limitations and suggests the use of trained auxiliary egos within individual sessions (Figusch, 2009, 2019; Moreno, 1959, 1972). Figusch (2009, 2019) writes, "despite of Moreno's opposition towards and lack of interest for one-to-one psychodrama, this working modality has quietly found its way into the everyday practice of psychodrama therapists around the world" (p. 11). Today, practitioners are using psychodrama, mostly without auxiliary egos, in individual sessions regularly. Because Moreno considered the dyad to be the smallest group, some have suggested that one-to-one psychodrama is simply another modality with Moreno's group psychotherapy (Brito, 2019). This approach has been described with many names including monodrama, bipersonal psychodrama, one-to-one psychodrama, psychodrama a deux, and individual psychodrama. The next two chapters will provide a brief introduction to the use of Moreno's methods in individual work. This topic has been covered in depth by other contemporary authors including Fonseca (2004), Cukier (2008), Knittel (2009), Figusch (2009/2019), and Chesner (2019).

References

- Brito, V. C. A. (2019). One-to-one psychodrama: Reflections on the theory and practice of psychodrama with an individual patient. In Z. Figusch (Ed.). *From one-to-one psychodrama to large group socio-psychodrama* (2nd ed.) (pp. 15–28). United Kingdom: lulu.com.
- Chesner, A. (Ed.). (2019). *One-to-one Psychodrama Psychotherapy: Applications and Technique*. New York: Routledge.
- Cukier, R. (2008). *Bipersonal Psychodrama: Its techniques, therapists, and clients*. São Paulo, Brazil: Author.
- Figusch, Z. (2019). *From one-to-one psychodrama to large group socio-psychodrama: More writings from the arena of Brazilian psychodrama*. United Kingdom: lulu.com.
- Fonseca, J. (2004). *Contemporary psychodrama: New approaches to theory and technique*. New York: Routledge.
- Knittel, M. G. (2009). *Counseling and drama: Psychodrama a deux*. Tuscan, AZ: Author.
- Moreno, J.L. (in collaboration with Z.T. Moreno) (1959). *Psychodrama second volume, foundations of psychotherapy*. , NY: Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1972) *Psychodrama Volume 1* (4th ed.). Beacon, NY: Beacon House Press.
- Moreno, J. L. (2019). In E. Schreiber, S. Kelley, & S. Giacomucci, (Eds.), *The autobiography of a genius*. United Kingdom: North West Psychodrama Association.