

## Part VI

# Sociometry and Psychodrama in Community, Organizational, and Educational Work

Community practice in social work has been defined as the use of “practice skills to alter the behavioral patterns of community groups, organizations, and institutions or people’s relationships and interactions with the community structures” (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wenocur, 2011, p. 1). The social work profession’s inclusion of community work and its core value of social justice arguably are what most differentiate social work from the other mental health fields. In the past few decades, the decline of group work concentrations in social work education have led to increased focus on one-to-one clinical social work and community practice. Nevertheless, social work practice includes the integration of work with individuals, groups, and communities. Similarly, the implementation of Moreno’s methods around the world has been executed with attention to work with individuals, groups, and communities.

The use of Moreno’s methods in community work can be traced back to the beginning of psychodrama’s history. Prior to applications in psychotherapy, Moreno’s methods and his work were primarily with communities. The field of sociometry emerged from Moreno’s work with a community of refugees—sociometry began as community work. Similarly, the event Moreno recognizes as the birth of psychodrama and sociodrama was also clearly community work. In Austria, he worked with groups of children in the parks of Vienna, with sex workers in Vienna, with immigrants and refugees in the city and in Mittendorf refugee camp, and with public audiences through his Theater of Spontaneity. Even after his migration to New York, his initial work was also all community based—with prison communities, a residential community in Hudson at the New York Training School for Girls, and with public audiences at Carnegie Hall through his Impromptu Theater. Even Moreno’s clinical roles could be framed through the lens of community work as he was working with a psychiatric inpatient community and creating a professional communities oriented around sociometry, psychodrama, and group psychotherapy.

Moreno’s vision of Sociatry, or healing for society, portrays his larger emphasis on community work (Moreno, 2019). Considering the nature of his first *group psychotherapy* projects in the 1930s, one might argue that Moreno’s original conceptualization of group psychotherapy was really a community approach. These initial group therapy initiatives were focused on large groups or communities, primarily

with underserved and oppressed populations (Giacomucci, 2019). Although he is most recognized as a psychodramatist and as a pioneer in group therapy, historical analysis suggests he initially was engaged in community work. A simple review of the titles and contents of his book publications reveal that he wrote comprehensively about society and communities. For example, these books are heavily focused on societal and community issues:

Moreno, J. L. (1934). *Who Shall Survive? A new approach to the problems of human interrelations*. Washington, DC: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co.

Moreno, J. L. (1951). *Sociometry, experimental method and the science of society: An Approach to a New Political Orientation*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House

Moreno, J. L. (1956). *Sociometry and the Science of Man*. Beacon, NY: Beacon House.

In addition to these publications, he also released multiple monographs and journal articles focused entirely on theories of society, community, culture, and the future of mankind. This section will highlight Moreno's focus on communities and society while depicting the usefulness of sociometry and sociodrama in community and organizational settings.

## References

- Giacomucci, S. (2019). *Social group work in action: A sociometry, psychodrama, and experiential trauma therapy curriculum*. Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) Dissertations. 124. [https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=edissertations\\_sp2](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=edissertations_sp2).
- Hardcastle, D. A., Powers, P. R., & Wencour, S. (2011). *Community practice: theories and skills for social workers* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moreno, J. L. (2019). In E. Schreiber, S. Kelley, & S. Giacomucci (Eds.). *The autobiography of a genius*. London, UK: North West Psychodrama Association.