

Section 4: Book Reviews

Book Review

***Ethnodramatherapy: Integrating Research, Therapy, Theatre and Social Activism Into One Method.* By Stephen Snow. Routledge, 2022.**

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Stephen Snow has written a fascinating and seminal book on ethnodramatherapy (EDT), a form of social action research he developed over decades after becoming acquainted with Jim Mienczakowski's work in ethnodrama. Briefly, Mienczakowski says of ethnodrama, "The reconstruction of ethnographic research into consensually validated and open-ended forum health theatre represents an original, practical and viable methodology for bringing about individuated emancipation" (1995, p. 276). Whereas Dr. Snow gives Moreno and Bram credit for discussing and actualizing ethnodrama before Mienczakowski, he was not aware of their work until years after he began utilizing the form.

Dr. Snow takes us step by step through the historical perspective of how he came to develop EDT. He makes clear the depth and breadth of research that went into its genesis and how it evolved over the years. The book offers a wonderful opportunity to learn how one might construct a viable research project to validate psychodramatic, sociometric and sociodramatic action.

This reviewer found the book hard to put down. Dr. Snow interweaves his personal and professional history with EDT's development. Given that one of the main goals of EDT is emancipation, his candor parallels what EDT seeks to do: allow each of us to be seen and respected by ourselves and others. In several parts of the book, Dr. Snow mentions Moreno's dictum that the only true therapeutic goal is the evolution of everyone.

Dr. Snow also chronicles the development of EDT with a variety of populations over the years and the parameters of the research studies and their intended purposes. The visual images, the photos, his descriptions of the processes, and the verbatim quotations are deeply moving as well as instructive. He also offers a variety of warm-up exercises and theatre games he utilized to build sociometric trust. Some of the projects spanned a year or more and some just six days. In footnotes, he very generously offers opportunities to observe a couple of videos that are available.

The populations with whom he and his team worked and the themes they considered are varied and many. Developmentally disabled adults with a variety of diagnoses worked with how it feels to live their lives. A group of female adolescents

from a court-mandated group home explored their rage at disempowerment. Developmentally disabled adults explored sex education, love, and sexuality. A group of caregivers for loved ones with mental illness explored the stigma of mental illness as well as themes of helplessness and fear. Dr. Snow also discusses how a community-oriented project to increase awareness of the prevalence of mental health issues in the community and how to manage them respectfully within ourselves and in interaction with others was impacted negatively by the pandemic.

Finally, he discusses a six-day workshop model he developed to work in China. Dr. Snow goes to great lengths here, particularly to disguise specifics that might cause group members to be identified by a government that is oppressive. Nevertheless, he explores the themes and content of the workshops enough to make it clear how moving and powerful they were to participants and audiences alike.

All of these descriptions are immediate, informative, and moving. At the same time, Dr. Snow gives us an eye into the research aspects of each application that are extremely helpful to anyone wanting to replicate his process. Throughout, Dr. Snow is candid about the pitfalls and problems sociometric, ethical, and therapeutic. He conscientiously considers any error he and his colleagues have made caused by ignorance, confusion, ego, or countertransference.

It is to be noted that Dr. Snow, a prominent drama therapist and educator, began utilizing Playback Theatre early in his development of EDT. Over the years, he became more and more committed to utilizing sociometry, sociodrama, and psychodrama in EDT so that they are now a fundamental part of every project and vital parts of his model and format.

This book is excellent in so many ways: informative, honest, emotionally immediate, warm, and brilliant. Unbelievably, it's a fast read, perhaps because it's so varied and captivating. Please read it.

REFERENCE

- Mienczakowski, J. (1995). The application of critical ethno-drama to health settings. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Griffith University, Australia.