

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Trauma has become a much-discussed topic since the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration embraced its study and treatment. I think readers will find this an exciting issue, with three articles focusing on emerging evidence-based approaches to treating trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) using psychodrama and sociometry and two others concentrating on group psychotherapy and psychodrama's relationship to it both historically and practically. Moreno is known for saying "the body remembers what the mind forgets" (Volume 1). Our field has long recognized that emotional and psychological pain affects the body and requires a mind/body approach to healing. I have grouped the articles on trauma together so that readers can gain a broad view of how psychodrama and sociometry are being used to treat trauma and PTSD. After this is an excellent review of Moreno's pioneering role in establishing group psychotherapy as an evidence-based practice, followed by a practical and useful how-to on integrating psychodrama with process groups in the Practitioner's Corner.

Psychodrama and sociometry are relational methods that are most often done in groups accessing the power of each and every member of the group as potential healing agents. Those of us in our field who have been adapting psychodrama and sociometry to the treatment of PTSD have well-developed applications for using our experiential methods, which represent the roots of group therapy, role play, and sociometric investigation and application. This journal represents an important advance in our documenting the ongoing validation of our methods through scientific analysis.

Further in the Practitioner's Corner we have two versions of a much-used sociometric process called the Step-In Circle, exploring both its history and application.

OVERVIEW OF ARTICLES

In "Psychodrama Intervention for Female Service Members Using the Therapeutic Spiral Model"—by Rebecca Perry, OTS; Kyla Saby, OTS; Jeanne Wenos, PED; Kate Hudgins, PhD; and Stephanie Baller, PhD—we have a beautifully laid-out study of the effectiveness of the Therapeutic Spiral Model developed by Hudgins in treating PTSD in the military. The writers report that the study, which uses "two pretests (the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Beck Hopelessness Scale), and the same posttests," was "approved following a full board review by the James Madison University Internal Review Board."

Of additional interest to note is the Body Language Checklist created by the testers, a 32-item checklist of “nonverbal behaviors, such as eye contact, furrowed brow, arms crossed, and open chest.” The researchers conducted frequency sampling by observing each participant for one minute on an hourly basis in order to read their body language, thus widening exponentially their ability to read the effectiveness of their approaches and the comfort level of participants. As trauma is a body/mind phenomenon, this addition of a scale for reading body language significantly strengthens the argument for a body/mind approach to healing. This study represents a noteworthy contribution to our literature, and the authors are to be commended.

In our next article, by Eric Rutberg, DHEd, the title itself—“Beyond Words: Learning to Use Role-Play to Treat PTSD”—is applying psychodrama as a form of exposure therapy. In the beginning of the article, the author lays out a clear and informative overview of the issues and symptoms involved in PTSD, along with a proposed approach for using exposure therapy for symptom reduction. He adapts role play to his treatment goals and has created a model for treating PTSD that both educates clients and offers treatment. The very important function of role play/role training and its potential for raising awareness and creating ego strength and resilience and reducing anxiety is implicit in Dr. Rutberg’s clear and accessible reporting. Both his description of PTSD and his treatment rationales are clearly laid out, and I think many who do work with trauma will gain insight into the issues involved and identify with his findings. In reading the data that the author collected from his groups, it is interesting to note from his findings that anxiety about doing role play from being told about it is significantly higher in clients than it is after they have had an actual experience of using role play for personal healing.

In my own article “Neuropsychodrama in the Treatment of Relational Trauma,” I outline both neuropsychodrama, a trauma-informed approach to the use of psychodrama, and my model of Relational Trauma Repair and beginning evidence collection therein. Together these approaches represent the use of sociometry and psychodrama as experiential, relational approaches to healing trauma and PTSD. I discuss in my article how directors might deal with what I refer to as “the trauma vortex” or the experience of “reliving” trauma, which is so often a part of healing it. Relational Trauma Repair is an integration of sociometric principles with up-to-date research on neurobiology and attachment as well as research on grief and forgiveness. Research findings are woven into criterion questions to create a psychoeducational model for use in addiction facilities, clinics, and groups that are dealing with trauma, PTSD, and forms of self-medication. Relational Trauma Repair mines the healing potential within the group and inspires and motivates participants to take hold of or become empowered shareholders in their own healing. The fluid, relational process allows participants to develop skills of emotional literacy, self-regulation, and relational experience as they identify with symptoms and issues, articulate them, and share them in the group, dyads, and clusters.

In “J. L. Moreno: The Origins of the Group Encounter Movement and the Forerunner of Web-Based Social-Network Media Revolution,” Thomas Treadwell, EdD, TEP, CGP, provides an important historical context for Moreno’s place in

the history of group psychotherapy and sociometry. He traces the chronological roots of group psychotherapy and sociometry, reporting: “Moreno was asked by the New York State Board of Corrections to conduct a study on the feasibility of group psychotherapy within the penal system at Sing Sing prison. With the assistance of a graduate assistant, Helen Hall Jennings, the research was carried out during 1931–1932 and published as a monograph entitled *Application of Group Method to Classification* (Nolte, 2014). Their results were reported at the 1932 American Psychiatric Association in Philadelphia, where Moreno first introduced the terms ‘group psychotherapy’ and ‘group therapy.’ His presentation is considered to be the formal start of group psychotherapy, because this was the first time the term was used in the social sciences. In addition, this presentation introduced sociometry, his system of measuring inter- and intrapersonal relationships within groups (Marineau, 1989).”

Dr. Treadwell provides scholars of our method with firsthand information about its creator and his impact on the mental health field, the encounter movement, and all systems that use role play and sociometry. Additionally, he underlines the ingenuity of what is certainly one of psychodrama’s most impactful contributions, role reversal. This article adds significantly to the literature of our methods.

In “Combining Psychodrama and Process Group Therapy,” authors Shelley Korshak Firestone, MD, and Adam Blatner, MD, address one of our main concerns today: Where and how does psychodrama fit into the mental health field? While Moreno’s vision extended beyond the mental health field “to the streets,” he is also seen as a pioneer of group psychotherapy, which has been one of psychodrama’s primary homes. A conundrum that therapists face in using psychodrama is how and where it fits into process-oriented groups; does psychodrama require a structure that does not make it user-friendly in process groups, or can the two be woven together?

The authors write, “J. L. Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, thought of psychodrama as a group method. In 1942, he organized the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP). That same year, Samuel R. Slavson began organizing the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA).” They further delineate several practical ways in which they are able to effectively bring techniques of psychodrama into process groups, integrating the two and, by doing so, strengthening each. The integration of psychotherapy process groups with psychodrama might be seen as at least one potential wave of the future. These authors provide a service to our community in continuing this important discussion and making this integration real and relevant.

Practitioner’s Corner

We have two interesting write-ups of the Step-In Circle in this issue. In “Practical Applications of Step-In Sociometry,” Dale Buchanan, PhD, TEP, goes into very helpful historical background on how this popular process developed. Framing its origins not only helps to elevate it to a more theoretically sound process, it gives the reader another chance to understand and appreciate the wide and powerful

reach that sociometry has. Step-in sociometry has the advantage of being easy to run and teach others to run, and unthreatening to participate in. Dr. Buchanan explains that “the larger picture of sociometry is to illuminate and create connections between people, to teach people that all choices are based on criteria (whether conscious or unconscious), to empower people to make conscious choices based on conscious criteria, and to educate people about how access to roles is obtained, how to increase their sociometric intelligence, and how to successfully navigate their way through group experiences.”

Marlow Archer, PhD, PAT, in “Who, Like Me, Loves to Use the Step-In Circle?” begins with her negative sociometric experience that put participants on the spot and then expands on what she feels to be a positive sociometric process, step-in sociometry. She makes the important distinction as to how a Step-In Circle constitutes positive sociometry: “A group member may want to know who, in the circle, has been arrested, but they only get to find out if they have also been arrested and are willing to disclose that first, risking that perhaps they are the only one.” Along with her relating of techniques, she describes several populations in which she has been able to use the Step-In Circle to warm up and bond groups. She also shares a way in which she translated the concepts of the Step-In Circle to involve a group of 250 participants, inviting all who wished to have a quick, participatory, and very effective experience of sociometry.

Poetry

Psychodrama has the very unusual ability to recreate, in situ, the hungers and longings of the human mind, body, and spirit. Linda Ciotola, in her poem “The Sleeping/Awakening Child,” gives voice to that experience of awakening inner roles or selves that psychodrama stimulates. Poetry, because of its ability to speak in the language of the deeper mind, has the ability to more directly reveal psychodrama’s innate power to touch the human spirit. This piece is a good example of how a poetic voice can at times speak from the heart more directly in poetry than in prose.

Book Reviews

Adam Blatner, MD, TEP, gives an interesting review of *Shrink: The Untold Story of Psychiatry* (Little, Brown, 2015), by Jeffrey A. Lieberman, MD, in which he encourages those in our field to welcome our dual nature. “Morenian methods,” he writes, “may find their main use in being integrated with cognitive therapy and various other approaches. Indeed, some role playing already is being absorbed.”

Rob Pramann, PhD, TEP, gives a thoughtful and thorough description of John Nolte’s book *The Philosophy, Theory and Methods of J. L. Moreno*. In Nolte’s own words, “The big challenge ahead, it seems to me is an epistemological one: to build and rebuild on Moreno’s foundations in a coherent, systematic, and all-encompassing way.” Certainly there is much truth to this. To this end, Dr. Pramann lays out Nolte’s book section by section so that readers can get a sense

that they may, by reading, take an enlightening and informative personal journey through parts of Moreno's life and mind.

Rob Pramann, PhD, also reviews *The Psychodrama Papers* by John Nolte, PhD, a book of Nolte's collected experiences in training with and working with Dr. J. L. Moreno. For example, in "A Psychodrama Protocol," Nolte recounts an actual prototypical open session he directed at the Moreno Institute in 1972, while in "Catharsis, from Aristotle to Moreno," he explores the "concept of catharsis, the controversy surrounding the term, and Moreno's subtleties in his use of it." "Psychodrama and Dimensions of Experience" describes how "psychodrama can be understood and utilized as a phenomenological method of exploring personal and collective experience." Among the other topics explored in this book are "Strategies of Directing," "Psychodramatic Production of Dreams," "Role Reversal with God," "Psychodrama in the Treatment of Incest and Other Kinds of Sexual Abuse," "A Psychodramatic Perspective on Rage in Group Psychotherapy," "Role Training in Medical Education," and even "Protagonist without a Problem." Dr. Nolte appears to offer a sort of "up close and personal" account of his life with Moreno, Moreno's varied and fascinating explorations, as well as his own journey as a director.

Working as an Executive Editor for 8 years and as the Editor-in-Chief for an additional 7 years has been my pleasure and privilege. I wish to thank all of those on the Executive Board and on the ASGPP staff for their support over this period. And a special and ongoing thank you to the Executive and Consulting Editors for working to maintain our journal at high academic standards.

In the past 8 years, we have resurrected our journal and brought it back into publication. We have created a strong board of Consulting and Executive Editors. In addition to our traditional hard-copy journal, we now have an online version, which is available at <http://www.asgppjournal.org/>.

We have also tried through workshops and articles to inspire new writers in describing our methods so that our own and other disciplines can use our journal as a window into understanding our therapeutic concepts and techniques. Writing about what we do is critical to the continued success of our field. I thank our community for the honor of serving you.

Tian Dayton, MA, PhD, TEP