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Contents

The Metaphysics of Creativity as Reflected in Moreno's Metapraxis and the Mystical Tradition <i>Adam Blatner</i> <i>Allee Blatner</i>	155
On the Definition of Psychodrama: Another View <i>David A. Kipper</i>	164
The Clinical Application of a Sociometric Test in a Therapeutic Community: A Case Study <i>Neil M. Passariello</i> <i>Craig Newnes</i>	169
Strategic Sociometry <i>Antony J. Williams</i>	185
Index to Volume 40	200

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The Metaphysics of Creativity as Reflected in Moreno's Metapraxie and the Mystical Tradition

ADAM BLATNER
ALLEE BLATNER

ABSTRACT. In his seminal book, *The Theatre of Spontaneity*, J. L. Moreno introduced the term "metapraxie" to highlight some of his basic philosophical ideas about creativity. In this paper, these ideas are expanded by showing similarities of essential concepts with aspects of the work of Whitehead, Bohm, Jung, and the medieval Jewish mystics, the Kabbalists. The latter group's system used a diagram called the tree of life that suggested relationships among the basic components of the creative act. These are discussed in terms of their implications for the modern world.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF J. L. MORENO was based on his intuitive sense of the central importance of the process of creativity, not only as an aspect of human psychology but also, more important, as a fundamental aspect of all existence. He described a metaphysical concept he called metapraxie, derived from the word praxis, referring to the idea of practice rather than theory (Moreno, 1947, pp. 34-37). He was trying to communicate his vision of the cosmos as being more an act than a state of being. In light of a number of recent developments in the sciences (Young, 1984) and the evolution of consciousness, Moreno's idea is worthy of recognition as being in consonance with our emerging world view.

Moreno's concept of metapraxie shows similarities not only to Whitehead's philosophy (Blatner, 1985) but also to David Bohm's theory of the wholeness and the implicate order of existence (Bohm, 1979). It also may be related to Carl Jung's theory of archetypes; to aspects of kundalini yoga (Pearce, 1985, p. 117; Ponce, 1973, pp. 150-153); and to some ideas of the medieval Jewish mystics, the Kabbalists. Metapraxie is also compatible with Plato's philosophy of essential forms, and its basic idea can be found in the works of other philosophers.

Moreno's essential point in formulating the concept of metapraxie was to communicate that there are creative processes that are innate in the patterns of emergence of every event in our world, both physical and mental. These are not directly measurable as manifest phenomena, but rather are essential, abstracted, intuitively recognized commonalities that give form to the particularities of existence in the view of Scheler (1958, pp. 8–15). Scheler, a philosopher and older contemporary of Moreno's in Vienna, contributed to Moreno's literary journal, *Daimon*, and considered recognition of this abstract level of existence to be a major component of the philosophical endeavor. Jung's concept of archetypes also addressed unifying patterns of psychic functioning that he observed cross-culturally in dreams, myth, ritual, and art; however, he did not extend this observation to a concern with the nature of ultimate reality (Jung, 1959; Zolla, 1981).

Moreno's insight arose from his contemplation of the universal nature of creativity. In writing about metapraxie, he was attempting to develop the philosophical foundation for his theories of creativity and spontaneity. His ideas also invite the reader to use intuition when considering the nature of the creative act, to sense that there are essential elements that are implicit in the act yet transcend its specifics. Prior to or within the manifest, material level of existence (a relationship that is closer to that of the dream and the dreamer than an aspect of time or space), there is a realm or level of formative elements. Bohm calls this manifest level the explicate order and the more primal process the implicate order. In psychology the realm of formative elements is referred to by Jung as archetypal images; in the Kabbalah, it is called the world of formation.

Yet when one examines essential creative processes, one finds even more implicit and almost mystical levels of metaphysical operations. Behind and beyond the level of formation is what Bohm terms a level of "causal energy," an "intent to display as a functional blueprint of possibility" (Pearce, 1985, p. 117). Jung might consider this level the category of archetypes, prior to their taking form as images. In the Kabbalah, it is called the world of creation, and it is this dimension that Moreno refers to by his term *metapraxie*. Going further, there is the most basic level, the ultimate state of existence from which everything springs. In the Kabbalah, this is the world of emanation. At this stage, the mind has come as close as it can to imagining, in the abstract, the unknowable and infinitely energetic Godhead that Moreno refers to in his inspirational poetry (1971).

In order to understand these dimensions better, one must trace the process, beginning with the most essential phenomenon, the primal energy. As this energy begins to enter the world, it first manifests itself as a general creative impetus, then becomes elaborated as formative princi-

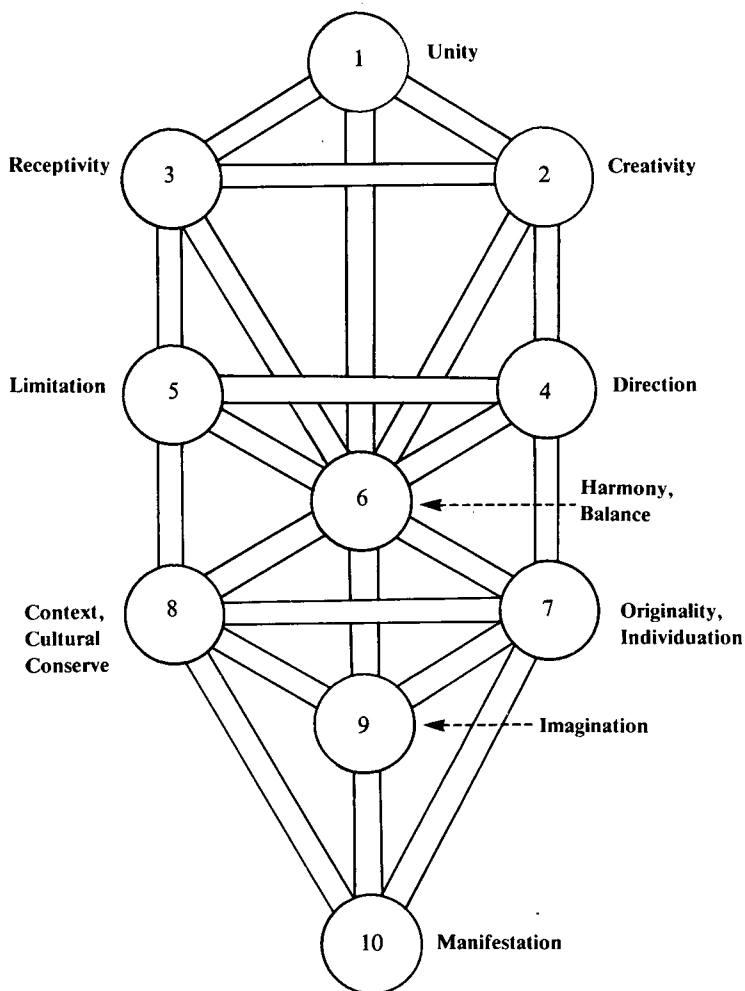
ples. Only at this stage can it be directly perceived with one's senses. Such a process of unfolding can occur in the briefest of moments, probably beyond our notion of time and space. From this realm, the manifest products of creativity emerge. At this point in the process, only the final, most materially manifested expressions can be detected, even with the finest instruments. The other levels, as with the mathematics of subatomic quantum physics, are derived through inferences and direct intuition.

In deep contemplation or disciplined meditation, a person's consciousness can be attuned to go beyond the conventional thoughts and images of the manifest level, enter the dreamlike world of archetypal images, penetrate into a state of formless awareness of pure energy—Moreno's *metapraxie*—and, on occasion, may briefly contact the moment of *satori*, that mystical union with the wholeness of things.

The Tree of Life

An examination of the intrinsic nature of creativity and the complexities involved in its source and manifestation also can be seen in the work of the Kabbalists. During the 12th through the 16th centuries A.D., a tradition of mysticism emerged in a part of the Jewish community living around the Mediterranean, especially in Spain and northern Palestine. These early practitioners of the Kabbalah (also spelled Qabbala or Cabala) inspired followers and the development of a rich body of literature spanning hundreds of years. One aspect of this tradition was a diagram called the tree of life (Figure 1), which was used for contemplation, portraying 10 divine attributes in a particular relationship (Cook, 1974). In some ways this can be viewed as similar to the tantric yoga method of using diagrams, *yantras*, as aids in meditation. Scholars recognize that these esoteric practices were a prescientific approach to penetrating the mysteries of existence. In seeking the hidden meanings behind appearances, practitioners of these ancient methods were using a more intuitive analog of modern biology, linguistics, particle physics, and psychoanalysis, all of which, in this sense, may be thought of as esoteric endeavors.

The diagram of the tree of life may also serve, in more modern psychological terms, to remind us of the interrelation of basic creative processes inherent in each person (Hoffman, 1981). This approach can be useful not only philosophically but also in working in therapy, in personal growth, or with aesthetic endeavors. The 10 divine attributes (in Hebrew, *sefirot*) suggest many meanings (Halevi, 1975), but for the purposes of this article, they may be thought of as principles worthy of consideration in any creative act. The following brief review of the 10 aspects is useful in con-

Figure 1. Diagram of the Tree of Life.

templating further dimensions of the interconnectedness of the manifest and premanifest.

The first attribute is that of unity, which reminds us that our existence is all part of a greater wholeness. This level corresponds to the most basic realm of primal energies.

The second attribute is creativity, the primal desire. The third sefira is the principle of receptivity, of recognizing that there are others also creating; it reminds us to be open to the field of action as part of our own creativity. It also incorporates the creative power of not doing, in allowing for or bringing forth the creativity of others, of knowing when to wait, of allowing for the intervals between the notes. The principles of creativity and receptivity form a syzygy, a pair of opposites that are more like two sides of a coin, inseparable, meaningless without each other (e.g., dark/light, figure/ground, male/female). As primal principles, yin and yang (in Chinese philosophy) may be broadly considered as corresponding to this syzygy. The creative and receptive principles form a synthesis of source and relationship; this concept is also found in Whitehead's philosophy (Nobo, 1986). There are many other primal dualities (Ornstein, 1972), and this level of the principles of creativity and receptivity represent the realm of Moreno's metapraxie.

The fourth through the ninth sefirot represent the realm of implicate order, the world of formation. The fourth principle is that of purpose, aim, focusing, or choice of direction, a shift from a vague yearning to something more specific. Inevitably, this narrowing of activity involves some degree of definition. This, in turn, implies (again as a syzygy) the fifth principle, that of limitation or restriction. Every creative act generates this dynamic tension, wanting to pursue some aim and testing the limits of its possibilities. The psychological implications here involve taking responsibility for making choices and dealing with their consequences.

The sixth sefira functions as the essential aesthetic attribute, the reminder that one can seek harmony, balance, and beauty in one's creative efforts. In one sense, it is the product of the fourth and fifth sefirot, an illustration of the mediating principle between two seeming polarities. It should be noted that in coordinating a dynamic dance of creative process, temporary imbalances, tensions, shifts, and modulations also have some place. This principle should also be thought of as balancing the next two sefirot.

The seventh sefira represents individuation, the emergence of originality or unique variation. Yet here, too, one finds that such originality can only be meaningful within a context of the eighth sefira, the principle of the cultural environment (also called the cultural conserve by Moreno). Otherwise, it becomes chaotic. The syzygy of these two principles might be reflected in such creative activities as melodious bird songs within a species, poetry within a general language structure, or a new philosophy within a more general cultural context. Even nonsense poetry or prose must allow itself some restraint and integration within an ordinary form if it is to succeed in achieving an effect rather than mere garble.

The ninth sefira is the principle of imagination, dream, fantasy, or the mental contents of inspiration. Perhaps this dimension also involves connections with other psyches—part of the collective unconscious. In nature, it may correspond with what Rupert Sheldrake (1981) calls morphogenetic fields. Its implication is that we must honor and cultivate this source of creativity and allow it some expression.

The 10th sefira is manifestation, without which creativity remains an autistic illusion. It is a call to each of us to dare to express our creativity in tangible forms, a reminder to write down our ideas, draw the pictures in our mind's eye, go to the piano and pick out the tune that keeps running through our heads.

To help make these abstract ideas more concrete, consider jazz musicians as they improvise. They are intuitively aware of the unity of their beings, their playing, and the audience—an illustration of the first principle. They enjoy their desire to make music and to cocreate with each other (principles number two and three). A certain melodic direction is found (number four), yet in their improvisation, they test the limits of that structure (number five). Within this process, there is the unifying aspect (number six) of making the music sound good and seeking aesthetic harmony. Each musician expresses some original explorations and individual style (number seven) but remains within the general flow of the key, rhythm, and musical form (number eight). The ninth principle emerges from the interweaving of influencing and being influenced by the audience and by one another, as well as the effect on the general mood set by the decor and architecture, the weather, time of the day or night. The amazing result of this multidimensional, cocreative activity is that it is fully manifested (principle number ten). The activity happens in a form that is real enough to be remembered far more vividly than a dream, perhaps even to be recorded for other audiences and other times.

In this example, all 10 principles are operating and may, in fact, serve the musicians as inspirations, sometimes on a subconscious level. In a more conscious way, these 10 principles might be thought of as 10 guideposts for creativity or 10 basic archetypal themes that can be used for conceptualizing a creative problem. Psychodramatists and other therapists who emphasize the empowerment of patients' creativity can also apply these ideas as a bridge to transpersonal work and a diagnostic aid for clarifying emotional blocks or imbalances. Readers should note that many difficulties result from a neglect of one or more of these aspects.

Implications of Metapraxie

This metaphysical model is meant to foster a contemplation of the inner nature of creativity and the exercise of the innate capacity for crea-

tive expressions. Its implications involve the sense of an imperative—a moral, existential injunction to participate as cocreators of this world. The universe is a divine gift that continues to give to mankind; accepting and exercising responsibility as cocreators is the appropriate response. The vision underlying all of Moreno's work resonates with this idea, which had been stated in 1931 by the philosopher Nicolai Berdyaev as the categorical imperative: Be creative; and foster creativity in others. Rather than further develop the metaphysical foundations of metapraxie, Moreno went on to operationalize it.

The essential corresponding principle to creativity is freedom, because only with a sense of psychological freedom can a person entertain original ideas; and only within a context of social freedom can one experiment with these ideas. The essence of Moreno's theory of sociometry is a search for methods to increase the degrees of freedom in social systems. Freedom of choice through sociometry, freedom of expression in psychodrama, freedom of action in self-help groups, freedom of imagination in improvisational theater—all grew from his basic philosophy. Metapraxie informed and inspired his energies. It sustained his sense that all forms can be questioned, manipulated, redefined, recreated because they all emerged from a spirit of creativity that transcends tradition and form itself.

Thus, Moreno freely experimented with techniques and also with media. He asked if cinema or television could be utilized for therapy; how role playing could be applied to education; how psychiatry could be applied to problems of the greater society. (He envisioned such a field and called it "sociatry.") He organized international conferences at which common elements of diverse approaches to psychiatric treatment were integrated long before such eclectic efforts were commonplace.

The emergence of the concept of creativity in philosophy has implications as profound as the effect of the idea of evolution in biology and cosmology. Creativity as we have been discussing it from Moreno's vision in metapraxie catalyzes our ability to transcend attachments to cultural forms—linguistic, socioeconomic, artistic, and educational. In sociology, Philip Berger recognized that field's potential to offer similar freedom by creating a view from the outside (Berger, 1974). By applying Moreno's methods for learning to recognize the dynamics of roles, one can begin to separate oneself from the performance. This freedom to question assumptions inherent in roles allows them to be renegotiated. For individuals, this is one of the goals of psychotherapy as well as of spiritual development. For groups and societies, it represents a potential for creativity and progress toward more harmonious functioning.

Moreno's deep commitment to the metaphysical truth of creativity,

which he described as metapraxis, led to action methods that significantly contributed to the evolution of the encounter group, existentialism in psychotherapy, organizational development in industry, academic and applied sociology, role playing and simulations in education, job training, and recreation, and improvisation in the theater, among others. This common philosophy runs through all of his work and has resulted in approaches that promote creativity, liberate spontaneity, and further personal and collective development. He has endowed us with a legacy of keys to unlock doors to greater freedom through the exercise of our own creativity and the obligation to teach these skills to others.

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On the Definition of Psychodrama: Another View

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ABSTRACT. It is argued that even a "theory free" definition of psychodrama requires a set of assumptions. A rationale for a previous article by Peter Felix Kellermann (1987) to define psychodrama on the basis of its procedure is offered. The discussion leads to proposing a general, brief, procedure-related, formal definition.

IN A RECENT ISSUE, a thorough examination of the problems concerning the definition of psychodrama was discussed (Kellermann, 1987). Starting with the absence of a consensual definition, the analysis proceeded to identify a number of sources believed to have contributed to the current state of confusion. The five sources mentioned were: the history of inconsistent definitions; the linking of psychodrama to the triadic system, i.e., sociometry, group psychotherapy, and psychodrama; the eclectic character of psychodrama; the lack of a clear separation between therapeutic and nontherapeutic applications; and the tendency to relate the definition to a specific theory. In an attempt to set the record straight, Kellermann suggested a new point of departure by essentially advocating the following position: Psychodrama ought to be considered a self-contained, specific procedure (method) of psychotherapy, not necessarily related to a particular theory. This approach seemed to rest on two key elements. First, adopting a "theory-free" position, that is, "psychodrama should be defined in a way that does not assume a theoretical orientation" (Kellermann, 1987, p. 78). Second, focusing on the *procedural aspects* of the method in order to arrive at a definition of "not what the intentions are or what is achieved, but a procedural description of what a psychodrama director actually does" (p. 78).

A closer examination of this position seemed to suggest that the two elements are interrelated, that the second might be a corollary of the first. Thus, subscribing to the notion of independence from theoretical

affiliation would seem to leave *the method* as the only alternative frame of reference.

Although the above position was formulated for the specific purpose of defining psychodrama, nonetheless, its adoption signifies a profound departure from traditional psychodramatic thinking. It implies that the hitherto claim for an exclusive relationship between the method of psychodrama and Moreno's theory seems unnecessary. It goes even further to suggest that such exclusivity sets undesirable constraints on the potential wider acceptance of the psychodramatic procedure. As an alternative, it conceptualizes the method as a self-contained treatment intervention, separated from any specific theoretical orientation, thus claiming to broaden its scope and placing it better among other therapeutic modalities.

The call for adopting such a broader perspective is not new. In a review of the research on the effectiveness of psychodrama, a recommendation was made to define psychodrama on the basis of its procedure (Kipper, 1978). Furthermore, in a recent publication (Kipper, 1986), an approach that specifically stressed the independence of the psychodramatic method and role playing from affiliation to any particular *existing theories* of psychotherapy was introduced. This approach, based on the notion of "conceptual neutrality," was described as follows:

After all, a large number, if not the majority, of clinicians subscribe to therapeutic approaches other than psychodrama. . . . Recognizing the effectiveness of role playing, however, they apply this form of therapy without a model. This void calls for the formulation of a different kind of a general paradigm for the use of role playing. In contrast with previous attempts, which offered separate theory-bound models, the new proposed venture must be governed by a rule that might be labeled "a conceptual neutrality." This rule rests on . . . the recognition that it is possible to formulate a set of principles that do not interfere with existing theoretical views. . . . Using a literary analogy, a model based on "a conceptual neutrality" serves as the *text* for which various theoretical approaches provide the *commentaries*. (Kipper, 1986, p. 21)

The theoretical autonomy implied by the notion of "conceptual neutrality" is based on two inseparable parts: (a) an independence of existing theoretical views, *and* (b) a provision for *a new rationale* for the method (the procedure). It is this second part that is missing from, or at least has not been clearly articulated by, Kellermann's position, for even a procedure (a method) requires a rationale, a model, or a theoretical foundation of its own. The present contention is that a definition that stems from a new conceptual outlook requires certain assumptions about human nature as well as empirical suppositions concerning behavior and its relationship to the environment. Such a rationale would provide a defensible posture against the argument that the procedure rests on unsys-

tematic, utilitarian sets of interventions. It would also provide a basis for answering questions such as why does the definition underscore the importance of *dramatization*; what is the justification for having scenes that *approximate real-life situations*; or what is the need for using a *variety* of techniques?

The rationale provided by Kipper (1986) in the form of the "behavior simulation paradigm" represents an attempt to fill this gap. Briefly, it rests on these assumptions and principles.

(a) The ability of human beings to act (and role play) is part and parcel of the process of living.

(b) Human beings can plan such acts (behavior) in advance and produce the behavior volitionally as the result of either a conscious decision or the request of others.

(c) That ability is a manifestation of people's effort to master the world that surrounds them.

(d) When such an effort fails, corrective measures, for example, psychotherapy, might be required. The above-mentioned ability may be utilized in newly created miniature environments, namely, *simulated conditions* aimed at facilitating better coping. Actually, this principle is congruent with the basic premise underlying the psychodramatic method. It is a method that provides "new opportunity for a psychodynamic and sociocultural reintegration, [through] 'therapeutic cultures in miniature' . . . in lieu or in extension of the unsatisfactory natural habitats" (Moreno, 1964, p. xxii).

(e) *Simulated conditions* involve patterns of interactions between particular sets of behaviors and the characteristics of the situation.

(f) It is hypothesized that these patterns of interactions constitute distinct phenomenological (experiential) states that activate or emphasize different psychological processes; therefore, they are expected to produce differential outcomes.

These assumptions underlying the "behavior simulation paradigm," which actually identifies some distinct patterns and their relations to techniques, serve the method as a self-contained procedure.

For example, earlier a point was made regarding the merit of a sound rationale vis-à-vis three possible questions pertaining to the definition of the procedure. By subscribing to the above assumptions and principles, this is how these questions can be answered. Assumptions *a*, *b*, and *c* address the question of why the definition relies on dramatization and role playing as its mode of expression. Assumption *d* provides a justification for the question concerning the reason for using scenes that approximate real-life situations and externalization of feelings and attitudes. Finally,

assumptions *e* and *f* explain the reason(s) for having different techniques. At this juncture, it might be pointed out that assumption *f* demonstrates the inaccuracy of the criticism that the Kipper (1986) position "lacks the phenomenological aspect of psychodrama" (Kellermann, 1987, p. 78).

For traditional psychodramatists, accepting the first four assumptions poses no difficulty because they seem congruent with Moreno's theory. The remaining two represent a new addition to the theory. Other users may find the principle of "behavior simulation" sufficiently neutral and easy to adopt, at the same time retaining their favorite theoretical affiliation.

This still leaves open the issue of the *formal definition* of the method. Formal definitions tend to be brief and general. For example, Valom (1980) offered the following formal definition for existential psychotherapy: "Existential psychotherapy is a dynamic approach to therapy which focuses on concerns that are rooted in the individual's existence" (p. 5). Behavior modification was formally defined as "the attempt to apply learning and other experimentally derived psychological principles to problem behavior" (Bootzin, 1975, p. 1). Indeed, the definition ought to emphasize the key element(s) that distinguish the method from others. Starr (1977), for instance, pointed to the use of acting out as the key concept in psychodrama, then continued to describe the particular structure of the session. Her attempt, like some others (e.g., Kellermann, 1987), reflects a more *descriptive* than *formal* definition. According to Yablonsky (1976, p. 4), "the difference between psychodrama and most other methodologies, however, is that psychodrama comes *closest* to the natural scenarios of people in everyday life." His point is reminiscent of the assumptions underlying the behavior simulation concept. Therefore, a possible formal definition of the method might read "a method that uses dramatizations of personal experiences through role playing enactments under a variety of simulated conditions as means for activating psychological processes."

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Echoes of Moreno

The *Journal* would like to print descriptions of examples of general applications of Moreno's principles in daily life. Send them (typed, doublespaced) to the Editor, *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama & Sociometry*, HELDREF Publications, 4000 Albemarle Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20016.

The Clinical Application of a Sociometric Test in a Therapeutic Community: A Case Study

NEIL M. PASSARIELLO
CRAIG NEWNES

ABSTRACT. This case study presents the implementation of a sociometric test in a therapeutic community setting. After a description of the community and the therapeutic program, the administration and the processing of the test results are outlined. The group process is analyzed and discussed in terms of the norms and values of the group and how the sociometric stars reflect those norms and values. The implementation of the sociometric test is viewed as creating a therapeutic shift in the group's structure and norms.

WHILE INFORMAL APPLICATIONS of sociometric theory are employed quite frequently by psychodramatists and group therapists, Moreno's original formulation of the sociometric test is rarely discussed in the literature as a therapeutic technique for use with clinical populations. Sociometry is offered more as a theoretical frame for the observation and assessment of group behavior (Enneis, 1951; Buchanan, 1980), or as technique that has been taken away from therapeutic psychodrama and been applied in other fields (Hart, 1979), or as a philosophical construct that underpins psychodramatic theory (Mendelson, 1977). Specific sociometric techniques are also alluded to in the literature (Seabourne, 1963; Kole, 1967), but there is little in the literature presenting case study material that incorporates the philosophy, theory, and practice of the sociometric test with clinical populations.

In approaching the implementation of the sociometric test, the clinical staff raised concerns about the appropriateness of such an intervention. After discussion, the staff decided to proceed with the sociometric test in order to stimulate therapeutic interaction among the clients. The goals for the event were to uncover the interpersonal choice patterns among

the clients within the community; encourage the clients to consider how their individual sociometric positions within this community reflected their interpersonal styles not only in this group, but in forming relationships generally within their own social atoms; encourage clients to take responsibility for their interpersonal choices and to enact them; direct the processing of the sociometric test towards working through individual relationships within the community in a therapeutic manner, i.e., helping clients to attempt new, more satisfying conduct thus changing self-defeating patterns.

The Program

The sociometric test was implemented in a residential, therapeutic community for Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and brothers. The residents (i.e., the residential clients who comprise the therapeutic community population) are all adults who spend from 6 to 14 months in the program. The average length of stay is 9 months. While there are always about 26 residents at one time, therapy is individually tailored to the needs of each resident. Hence, the community has a rotating membership with residents leaving when therapy is completed and new members taking their places. The community maintains approximately an equal number of men and women residents at all times. The range of life problems and diagnoses among the residents is broad, from neurotic complaints to those labelled severe personality disorders. There are no people with alcohol problems in this program, nor are there any severely disturbed, delusional, or suicidal clients.

While the facility is not strictly a therapeutic community as conceived by Jones (1953), it approaches that ideal by including a great number of different types of group therapy in which residents are encouraged to be responsible for assisting each other in their therapeutic growth. These therapy groups include small group therapy, psychodrama, expressive therapy, art therapy, dance therapy, bio-energetic exercise group, psychotheological integration group, music-sharing group, and others.

Despite these many groups, the core of the program is considered unofficially by the residents and the clinical staff as consisting of two therapeutic modalities: the 50-minute therapy sessions that each resident has twice weekly with an individual psychotherapist and the 1-hour, large group community meetings that occur three times weekly. These large group sessions include all 26 residents and all the clinical staff, 11 psychotherapists.

Residents often refer openly to the primary therapeutic influence of the dyadic therapeutic relationships that develop in individual psycho-

therapy. Clinical staff also support this norm in staff meetings, since the individual therapist of a particular client is expected to know that resident's therapeutic goals most clearly.

The special value that is placed on the large community group meetings is supported by a number of factors. These meetings are scheduled more frequently than any other therapeutic intervention. In addition, the size of the group symbolizes its importance. Fears of deindividuation are increased in large group settings. The presence of so many therapists similarly raises separation/individuation issues for residents. Are they encouraged or discouraged by the proximity of their individual therapist? Is dependency and expectancy for the therapists to do the work for them heightened or reduced? The tension of simply being present in such a setting takes considerable energy for residents and therapists alike. Unlike the comfort of individual therapy, the large group immediately raises fears of being sucked in or swamped, performance anxiety, and exaggerated concerns about trust and confidentiality.

Sharing of issues in the large group meetings is rated by the residents as the most difficult therapeutic task that they must encounter in the entire program. It has been suggested by staff members that the norm in the community is that residents first become more open, trusting, and self-disclosing in individual therapy sessions. As this trust spreads to small group therapy sessions and other group modalities, the residents become more inclined to share their therapeutic issues in the large community group forum. It is as if the other therapeutic group modalities are preparation for self-disclosure in the large group—and also as if self-disclosing one's problems in the large community group is a mark of progress and thereby a mark of greater mental health within the value structure of the community. These standards have been suggested by the staff in their process of evaluating the therapeutics of the entire setting. They have not been shared with the residents overtly as a model through which residents are expected to progress. Instead, they are more reflections on the covert norms that have developed within the therapeutic system of the program rather than through overtly stated programmatic goals.

The Sociometric Test

The sociometric test was implemented in accordance with the guidelines established by Moreno (1953) and as described by Hale (1981). The logistics and rationale for the sociometric test were first shared with the residents by written explanations. Residents were then offered an opportunity to ask questions and express feelings about the upcoming event in their two psychodrama groups. This was done the week before the socio-

POS REC'D	4	11	11	3	8	12	5	9	11	6	11	8	7	5	9	7	5	7	3	6	2	12	5	7
NEG REC'D	2	2	0	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	3	1	3	0	3	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	4	0
TOTAL REC'D	6	13	11	3	11	12	7	9	13	6	14	9	10	5	12	8	6	8	4	8	2	12	9	7
POS MUTUALS	3	3	1	2	4	4	0	9	8	3	5	4	2	3	5	1	3	4	1	4	1	9	2	2
NEG MUTUALS	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
INCON- GRUENT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0
WEIGHTS:																								
POS	24	62	62	8	50	64	18	56	57	22	57	23	27	25	51	29	12	26	7	19	0	67	37	19
NEG	14	16	0	0	21	0	15	0	13	0	25	9	24	0	20	7	8	6	7	18	0	0	35	0
TOTAL	38	78	62	8	71	64	33	56	70	22	82	32	51	25	71	36	20	32	14	37	0	67	72	19

metric data were collected and shared. Sociometric criteria were also collected and voted upon by the community. It was explained that the data would be collected on a Thursday and that all of the raw data (including reasons for choices), sociomatrix, and sociograms would be shared with all residents the next day in a 3-hour community group in which the event and the feelings about the event would begin to be processed. It was also understood that during the following week, all regular therapeutic groups would be cancelled except for a single meeting with individual psychotherapists. The program for the week would consist of 10 sessions, 3½ hours daily, of large community meetings (all residents and all clinical staff). The purpose of this program was to continue to process the interpersonal choice patterns within the community and to reflect on their importance to therapeutic growth for the individual residents and the community as a whole.

Implementation

Sociometric data was collected from the residents during one hour on Thursday afternoon. The criterion chosen was: Among the residents in this community, whom would you most like to talk to about difficult therapy issues? There was some mild anxiety about the choice-making process, but most residents were actively involved. They were asked to make as few or as many choices as they liked and to rank two lists of choices (positive and negative). It was emphasized that reasons be included for each choice. The sociomatrix (Figure 1) and two sociograms (Figures 2 and 3) are included here. In the sociomatrix and sociograms, the 13 women are represented with circles and 11 men with triangles.

The Processing Session

All of the residents met with the sociometrist and one other staff member for 3 hours. The results of the sociometric test, including sociograms and the sociomatrix, were shared with the community. The event was framed positively, emphasizing that interpersonal choices are part of ordinary life but are not usually shared overtly in this form. It was suggested that the participants would learn much about their own individual positions in this group that might be reflective of their interactional patterns in their lives. It was also suggested that those individuals who were highly chosen (positively and negatively) had more influence on the group (i.e., that these individuals engendered stronger reactions from others in the group than those who were underchosen). Conversely, isolates and near-isolates were presented as individuals who had little power, influence, or effect on the group. Positive and negative stars were

FIGURE 2. Sociogram of positive choices.
First and second level choices only.
Criterion: Who would you most like to talk to about difficult therapy issues?

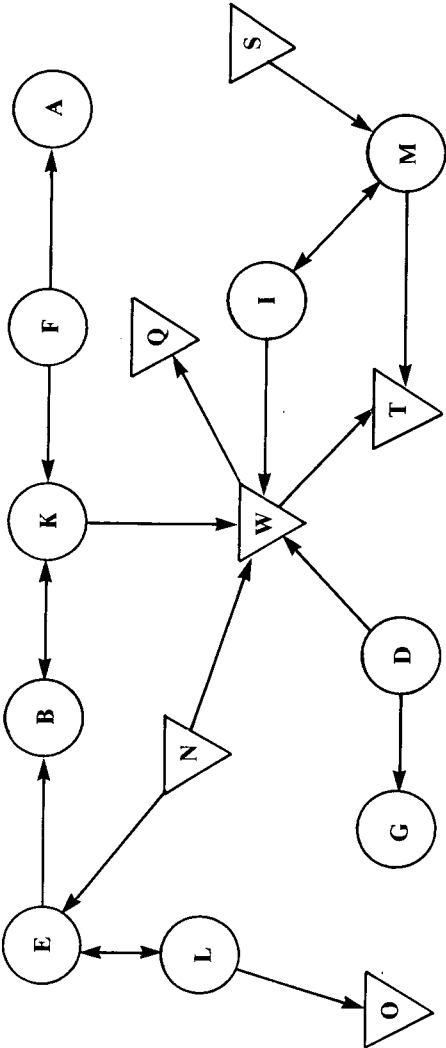
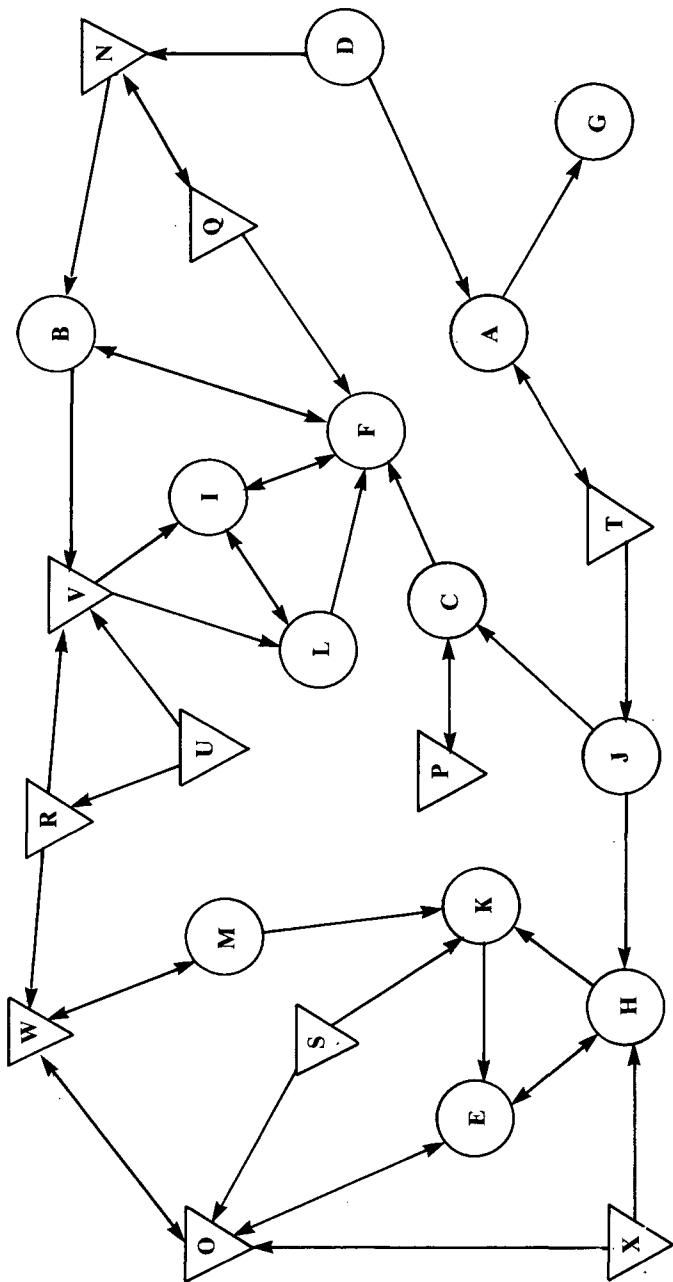


FIGURE 3. Sociogram of negative choices.
First and second level choices only.
Criterion: Who would you most like to talk to about difficult therapy issues?



also presented as having been overchosen due to their representation of values that the group either (respectively) embraced or rejected.

The sociomatrix and the sociograms were then shared with the group. The initial reaction of the group was varied, but most group members were silent. Some said they were not surprised, and others stated they felt it was good to get things in the open. Such defensive statements denied the emotional impact of the exercise.

An action sociogram of the first- and second-level positive choices was staged. Two sub-groups (W.-M.-K.-H.-E.-S.-O.-X. and C.-F.-L.-I.-V.-B.-N.-Q.) were clearly visible and commented upon by the residents. Some stated that this exercise brought into the open the group structure of the two cliques that had previously only been covertly acknowledged.

While standing in the action sociogram, individuals were then invited to make statements of their feelings about their respective sociometric positions in the community. Some of the near-isolates (U., S., and X.) expressed their surprise and hurt. Others (I., C., E., K., N.) who were clearly surrounded by their closest friends in the community stated that they felt quite comfortable. The positive star (F.) did not react or comment.

Another action sociogram was enacted of the first- and second-level negative choices. After a brief silence, the negative star (W.) seemed to become anxious and commented laughingly that his position did not seem so bad. He went on to say that all of the hands on his shoulders felt "warm." A woman (K.), who was choosing him negatively while she was receiving two negative choices, stated rather bitterly, "I'm not laughing!" And the man (T.) whom the negative star was rejecting added, "Neither am I! I'm now sorry that I didn't make any negative choices!" The expressions of hostility increased, mostly directed towards the negative star (W.). T. called him "the biggest bullshitter in this community," and K. told him she thought he was an "arrogant sonuvabitch." W. became increasingly defensive and responded with superficial appreciation of their feedback in an attempt to appear genuine.

At the close of the session, many residents retreated to a hostile dependent stance towards the staff, making such statements as, "Why did they [the staff] choose this topic and this exercise?" (C.); "I need to deal with my therapy issues, not this stuff! This is making me worse instead of better!" (B.); and, "It's like we didn't do our last intensive seminar [on the subject of interpersonal intimacy] the right way, so they're giving it to us again" (S.).

The Processing Week

Moreno (1953) stated that "A sociometric test is an examination of the structure of a specific group, at times for the purpose of its reconstruc-

tion” (p. 120). In the application of sociometry to clinical work, one measure of the success or failure of the intervention would be the degree of change that occurs in the group. That is, does the application of the sociometric test result in the group’s reconstruction of itself?

The following analysis of the week-long intensive therapeutic community meetings reviews in broad outline some of the changes that occurred in the sociometric structure of the group. The sociometric stars represent the underlying group norms and values, as stated previously. The analysis is necessarily interpretive and sketchy, as a detailed description of 18 hours of interaction among 24 clients is beyond the scope of this paper. The broad patterns of interaction provide some idea of how the sociometric test affected the group’s structure, its norms, and its values. The themes upon which the community focussed and the manner in which the sociometric stars functioned for the community are outlined.

What occurred over the next week strayed from the processing of the actual data of the interpersonal choices of the group but continued to focus on both the broader interpersonal dynamics of the community as well as on the individual residents’ relational styles. Many issues that had been brewing within the community were discussed more openly. Many of the habitual defensive styles of both the group and individual members were confronted and either dealt with more openly or more rigidly maintained.

Monday

The negative star, W., was confronted by T. on his “bullshitting.” W. was accused of being dishonest and untrustworthy. Many of the women in the group, led by H. and C., voiced their resentment to W. most strongly, and this theme generalized to the point that the women expressed feeling abused by the men. It is important to note that W.’s personal therapy issues involved his lack of concern for a woman with whom he had been intimate and that both H. and C. as well as the positive star, F., were women who had histories of childhood sexual abuse. G. expressed her anger and hurt at being isolated with only one negative choice. S. expressed his hurt at not being valued by the community.

Themes: Who can we trust in this group to be honest and not hurtful?

Women are victimized and abused by men, and therefore men cannot be trusted. Group has rated “men” as entitled abusers of women and “women” as passive servants who cannot escape victimization.

Affective Tone: Angry, hurt, and fearful.

Hypothesis: Will the community use the power of this event in a protec-

tive or abusive way? Can the community be a place where honest feedback is offered in a safe way? Can men and women relate without abuse?

Tuesday

K. opened the session by asking the men what they thought of women. The same themes predominated in these sessions, but the group retreated to a more intellectual stance rather than dealing with their feelings about interacting with each other. H. related briefly some of her pain of recognizing the effects of her childhood sexual abuse. This is not new information for the group though it is the most direct statement that H. had made to them about her feelings. She immediately retracted the power of her statement by absolving a male group member, Q., of his history of sexual abusiveness by telling him that he was "not like that." In the last two minutes of the group, the positive star, F., stated that she is "in agony" and asked the group for help. She did not mention her own sexual abuse issues overtly.

Themes: Continued focus on gender issues and the abuse of women by men.

Affective Tone: Guarded, intellectual. Avoidance of feelings.

Hypothesis: The anger and tension of yesterday's sessions was too hot, so the group backed off to a safer intellectual level. The community acted as if it were not safe to be authentic and share issues with each other in this group.

Wednesday

W., the negative star, attempted to reinstate himself positively with the community through repeated statements of appreciation for the feedback he has received. Group continued to view him as insincere and superficial, and he was ignored. The group's focus shifted to C., who painfully related her confusion regarding her gender identity. Although she knew she was a woman, she was painfully uncomfortable in female attire. (It is important to note that she was a victim of childhood sexual abuse.) W. again attempted to achieve a more positive status in the group by directly asking for reconciliation with K. with whom he had had a longstanding history of approach/avoidance. She finally decided to refuse to engage with him at all, giving him the ultimate rejection, that is, he is "not worth wasting time on." This seemed a turning point in the group process as the fantasy struggle between the entitled, abusive men and the victimized women had been acted out between these two. In re-

fusing reconciliation with W., K. had refused to reciprocate his abusive role and empowered herself.

Themes: Is it safe to get support from this group if you relate honestly your painful feelings here? Will the men continue to abuse the women who are in pain?

Affective Tone: Initially guarded and defensive. Shifted to compassionate when C. spoke. Shifted again to anger when K. and W. interacted, and then ended with hope.

Hypothesis: The conflict between the men as entitled abusers and the women as victims had been resolved for the group through the interaction between W. and K. By refusing to engage with W. and suffer more "abuse," K. had made it safe for herself and others to share feelings more openly and not fear the threat of being hurt by W. or other "bull-shitting" group members. She had also upheld the value of authenticity rather than the value of superficial, yet phony "niceness."

Thursday

Session opened with the absence of the positive star, F., being noted by the group. H., one of the victims of childhood sexual abuse, then invited the silent members of the group to share their issues, relating that her own self-disclosures had been healing for her. The negative star, W., continued in his attempts to regain the group's favor by self-disclosing in a superficial manner how the group had helped him achieve further insight into his issues. He was ignored. H. reinvited others to share. B., a particularly silent and frightened group member, was able to relate in detail much of the sexual and physical abuse that she had suffered in her life. P., another particularly reclusive and silent group member, was able to share much of his life disillusionment and pain with the community for the first time. The community is supportive, patient, and engaged throughout. The trust and honesty that were not seen in the negative star are now achieved through B's and P's sharing.

Themes: The importance of trusting each other with vulnerable feelings, i.e., breaking the code of silence and valuing the courage it takes to risk and achieve that trust.

Affective Tone: Compassionate, supportive, caring.

Hypothesis: The group had become safe enough for some of the more guarded and silent members to share deeper feelings. The group continued to avoid superficial bids to participate and supported those silent members who wished to share their painful histories. Authentic-

ity of emotional expression was valued; superficial pleas for attention and acceptance were rejected.

Friday

F., the positive star, opened the meeting with a clearly articulated statement of her anger and hurt at the staff and the community members, all of whom failed to respond to her needs in the Tuesday session. She directly referred to the sociometric test as an example of how her feelings were ignored, stating that she felt manipulated and unrecognized. The group responded to her by appreciating her presence and bringing to her attention how she is recapitulating her family dynamics through her guilt-inspiring behavior. It seemed she was valued as one to go to with therapy issues because she was a good listener but not a good sharer. Thus she was experiencing the stress of being overchosen—and in that sense, she felt ignored and did not get her own needs met. Although A. effectively bid to work in the afternoon session, I. made a statement about her feelings after Wednesday's session. The group chose to concentrate on I.'s intellectual examination of her past experience rather than attend to A.'s current distress. In the final session the group expressed guilt at ignoring A. and attempted to console and help her. A. expressed profound feelings of emptiness and said she had not been helped at all by the program. In the final 5 minutes, S. said how helpful the week's experience had been for him. There was no time for any further comments on the usefulness of the group experience.

Themes: Can I confront staff ("parents" or authority figures) with my anger and disappointment? Will the program continue to help me if I do?

Affective Tone: Angry and constructive in the morning. Guilty and flat in the final session. A sense of not having given/gotten enough. Denial of disappointment.

Hypothesis: Most group members had not articulated what they wanted from the group experience. For those who did not receive what they wanted, the final day represented a last chance. The inability to ask was projected onto the staff as a reluctance to give. Regrets and disappointments were too painful to share.

Discussion

The use of the sociometric test in this particular therapeutic milieu raises a number of clinical and conceptual issues. First, the application of a structured instrument to the group process was unusual. The large

group meetings in the community are viewed as unstructured; the therapists take responsibility for arranging the times of the group and the administrative arrangements for new members but otherwise act as facilitators, not directors. Though the processing week remained unstructured, a specific task, the processing of the sociometric test, was identified. Thus, the application of the sociometric test changed this norm.

Second, it was striking that most of the residents perceived the specific sociometric task differently. Many interpreted the question, "Who would you most like to talk to about difficult therapy issues?" as "Who do you like the most?" Within the context of this group fantasy, negative choices are thus seen as destructive and negative stars in danger of being destroyed. During the week, the negative star, despite several attempts to regain status in the group, remained neglected. Though he was not labeled a scapegoat, he was eventually rejected but did not leave. The positive star, however, did leave the group, possibly because the sociometric test raised her expectations of acceptance and respect. The attention of the group in the early stages, however, focused on the negative star, leaving the positive star envious and disappointed. It was she, not he, who left the group, only to return angrily and claim her space on the final day. Neither the positive nor the negative stars appeared to have received what they wanted (recognition and reconciliation) from the group.

The translation of "Who would you like to talk to" to "Who do you like?" in the wider context of the Catholic culture of the program also raises issues of guilt and trust for residents generally raised to believe that they should like and be liked by everyone. Telling someone they are disliked is perceived as very damaging and provokes guilt and remorse. The wish to damage loved objects as well as hated ones is rarely discussed in the therapeutic community. The introduction of the sociometric test thus exposed the community to the fears of openly expressing what they feel about each other and "destroying" the "disliked" individuals while simultaneously changing the frame of the large group.

Third, it is important to question the usefulness of raising such fears and exploring openly the dynamics within the group. This may be viewed in terms of the effect of the sociometric test on individuals and the overall effect on the community. It is clear that the increased structure in the group helped several individuals clarify their group status. The identification of the stars and the isolates is significant since this enabled the identified individuals to receive feedback on their position as well as to make statements about their own feelings. One resident, G., identified as a disliked near-isolate, shared her hurt and anger with the group at both her rejection by the group and by her family. On Thursday, P., another near-isolate, shared at length his lifetime of isolation and fears of rejec-

tion. The positive star was identified as powerful outside the therapy groups, while silent within them. This silence was broken on the final day. The negative star was chosen for a perceived inauthenticity. He was chosen the scapegoat because of his continuation of this style in the guise of asking for feedback while actually wanting reconciliation and forgiveness. For both the positive and the negative stars, these were life-long patterns that were exposed by the sociometric test and examined by the group.

Several comments can be made in terms of the long-term outcome for individuals: The sociometric test highlighted male-female issues in the group and allowed three residents to break their code of silence regarding their experience of child abuse. One was discharged soon after the sociometric event; the other two continued to openly work on sexual abuse in group and psychodrama. K., who confronted W., the negative star, used this confrontation as practice for confronting an equally demanding and narcissistic man in her own life. She satisfactorily ended that relationship and successfully left the program. The positive star has continued to work on her issues of sexual abuse and is no longer silent in group therapy. She is recognized as powerful both inside and outside the therapy groups. The negative star, clearly shocked and hurt by his position, did not regain any semblance of a positive position within the culture but continued to work on issues of inauthenticity and rejection in individual therapy. The inability of the group to find time to process the week on the final afternoon may be evidence of considerable unfinished business relating to the sociometric test. Several residents had spoken very little during the week, and others had claimed space to work but had not successfully accomplished anything. P.'s work was not built on, and he was discharged some weeks later without speaking again in any of the formal groups. For some individuals, then, the experience was very useful. For others, however, it was not, and the failure to allow these individuals to express their regrets and disappointments on the final day may be indicative of how angry some residents were at not receiving what they wanted.

For the group, the sociometric test appeared to achieve several positive results. It enabled the group to confront the negative star and observe his survival. Angry confrontation and expression of feelings of dislike were thus considered safe and acceptable in the group. The group was also enabled to discuss sexual abuse openly, a previously closed topic. Male-female issues reflect power, family, and gender concerns—all of which have since been viewed as acceptable, therapeutic material in the large group. Indeed, expressions of helplessness as well as power have been made more openly and frequently in the large group. In brief, the norm of what is acceptable and bearable had been changed through the implementation of the sociometric test. The defeat of the negative star symbol-

ized the group's wish to relinquish performing and inauthenticity in favor of acting responsibly and authentically. The value of trust, honesty, and spontaneity was emphasized by the group. It seems likely that the introduction of the sociometric test by the staff, though initially resented by the group, gave the group permission to create more open exploration of patterns of interaction and sub-groups. The group did not continue to express its resentment toward the staff, thus implicitly taking responsibility for the change and, as Moreno (1953) suggests, the reconstruction of the group.

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Strategic Sociometry

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ABSTRACT. The types of processes outlined in this paper are derived from Moreno's sociometric principles and systemic theory, which are now prevalent in family therapy circles. The resultant form of group intervention, called here *strategic sociometry*, appears to be useful for giving information to group members about similarities, differences, and alliances. In particular, information about the function of alliances, and the parties to them, are considered especially helpful in working with "stuck" groups. It seems to introduce fresh ways of thinking—a kind of structural rather than expressive way of clearing up relationships. The theory behind the interventions is couched in terms of coevolution, difference, and shifting the frame of thought. Examples from a training group are given throughout.

WHEN A DRAMATIC EVENT OCCURS in a group, members seem to form opinions about it and also seem to form alliances around those opinions. After a while, the opinions can be given the status of sacred truth (Boris, Zinberg, & Boris, 1975). A form of history is then created in the group in order to explain the present. Consider the following rather unremarkable example of an interaction in a training group:

Judith has just had a heated confrontation with Leah. The group, in fact, has been having a lot of rows over recent weeks, and this is one of many such outbreaks, some of which Duane has developed psychodramatically. Although the actual fight is over, it is in danger of being pasted into the group mythology by the Judith faction as "whenever anyone speaks out here, they're not supported," and by the Leah faction as "you can't even breathe here without getting attacked." The work of the group does not appear to be getting done.

Duane, the director of this group, has several options: to direct the encounter psychodramatically by expanding Judith's and Leah's roles to the fullest; to make group-as-a-whole interpretations on the state of the group; to make personal interpretations to Judith or Leah about the dynamics of their behavior; to spread the encounter between the participants among other group members; or to ignore the whole incident and see what happens next.

Duane does not do any of these things. He believes that the fight is not so much an expression of spontaneity as a manifestation of the group becoming stuck in a "fight" mode. That is, he conjectures that the point of the incident may lie outside the expressed hostility between Judith and Leah. He decides to test this hypothesis by directing the group's attention away from the two people involved. He asks:

Bob, when Judith gets angry, does Cindy feel closer to Lucy or farther away?

Lucy, does Bob feel more relieved before the outburst, or after it?

By asking these questions of people in the group other than Judith or Leah, Duane is acting on a circular and coevolutionary rather than a linear model of cause-and-effect (Bateson, 1972). He does not address the apparent principal characters of the incident directly; rather, he asks special types of questions involving comparisons (Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1980; Penn, 1982; Sanders, 1985; Tomm, 1984). His questions convey to the group a systemic understanding: not "X does this"; but "what Y does when X does this." In a coevolutionary conception of group work, no part of the system, Judith, for example, truly has unilateral influence over any other part of the system. The behavior of any part, such as the Judith-Leah dyad, is highly influenced by the behavior of the other parts, as well as by its own previous behavior. Since the influence is circular, Duane believes that his inquiry must be circular.

This section attempts to link the theory and practice of this type of intervention with sociometric ("the study of selective affiliation") principles. Moreno remarks that sociometry is to a large extent a classificatory science that inquires "into the evolution and organization of groups and the position of individuals within them" (1953, p. 51). It is a *socius* (companion) *metrum* (measure). Duane's questioning is based on verbal estimates of similarities and differences and therefore is in essence sociometric. Because his questions are usually asked of a third person, Duane's technique is a projective companion measure.

Duane wishes the group to discover its alliances around a particular problem or incident. His method is similar to one that the Milan Associates (Selvini Palazzoli et al., 1980) have called "circular questioning," which they developed as a countermove to families that were "stuck." Their interviewing style, which may be regarded as in some ways sociometric, aimed to provide the family with new ideas, especially concerning changes of relationships after a significant event. Similar conceptualization and practices may validly apply to a group that is "stuck." When the Morenean and the Milanese methods are grafted and applied to a group setting, the result can be called strategic sociometry.

A sociometric test investigates the choice activity among group members. It is an instrument that examines social structures through the measurement of attractions and repulsions that take place between individuals within a group. A "perception test" is a test usually given after a sociometric test in which a person's ability to perceive the choices of others for self and other is measured. Strategic sociometry acts as a perception test though it does not necessarily follow a sociometric test. As Moreno remarks, a sociometric test "is only a favorable and strategic first step for the more thorough investigation of the depth structure of groups" (1953, p. 92).

Theoretical Orientation

Fights in groups are sometimes a way of avoiding or delaying the work that the group has been set up to do. A group goes through several developmental phases, each of which produces dilemmas for the members and the leader (Bach, 1954; Braaten, 1974; Tuckman, 1965). Solutions to these dilemmas may be effective or ineffective, enabling or restrictive (Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964). When a group applies ineffective or restrictive solutions to its dilemmas, it becomes "stuck." Ineffective solutions may be dependency, fighting, fleeing, and pairing (Bion, 1961). A group comes together allegedly to change but develops basic assumptions quite contrary to that purpose. Their solutions are employed to help counteract the anxiety associated with changes demanded by the nature of the group itself.

Clearly, some solutions do seem to be more restrictive than others. Most psychodynamic labels, however, are themselves restrictive and punitive: anxiety, defences, avoiding intimacy, and so on. A preferable way to view stuck behavior is to see it as a restrictive solution representing nothing more than group members construing a dilemma in a certain way and acting in ways that seem best to them. Individuals will act in ways that they regard as self-enhancing, and a group will do the same. Consider the solution of "fighting," which was the one adopted by Judith and Leah. When two people in a group fight, they enter into a kind of paradoxical alliance whereby they attempt to do what seems best at the time—to ward off overpowering personal attention (avoid intimacy), to get over frustrations, or to win the leader's attention and favor. They could even be trying to help another member of the group who is depressed.

Duane tries to establish the function of the alliances in terms of what the reaction to them is in the larger group. He asks himself, "If fighting is a solution, what is the problem? Does fighting maintain the problem rather than resolve it?" He may then ask the group a series of questions

related to this notion. These questions elicit information about what pairs are operating in the group, and, furthermore, what effect those pairings have on the other group members. The questions could also produce information about feared disasters, the dangers that are evoked when one asks about the negative consequences of change, or the problems that would arise if the fighting stopped.

Duane might find that the members believe that a crisis in the group will stimulate cohesion. His questions would then track who believes that and who does not, who most and who least fears that the group is disintegrating, who has most to gain from the fighting. There might also be a consensus that the "problem" in the group's development has been people's "inability to deal with anger" (i.e., they see it as preferable to absorb insults and criticism rather than to react to them), and that there are certain people to whom the group particularly responds in this respect. Questions around the issue of anger can be asked of any member:

Carol, who notices first when someone is beginning to get angry?

Jim, who is most relieved in this group when someone blows their stack?

Following these questions, Duane can move the whole group into action, either by asking members to "place yourself on a line as to how relieved you are when someone blows his or her stack," or he can ask selected people to respond directly to Judith, or to Jim's choice of "who was most relieved" (perceptual sociogram). That is, the process can move back and forth between strategic sociometry, classical sociometry, action methods, and encounter.

Strategic methods tend to reveal a circuit of interactions around a problem or an event that has been identified—in this case, a fight. Duane considers that his strategic task is to discern and make known to the group the coalition alignments around any given problem in the present. He wishes to keep the situation and people's coalitions as fluid as possible. After a period of time in a group or organization, choice-making activity forms a pattern (Hart & Nath, 1979). If the group system, the pattern, is revealed or defined, it becomes freer to change (Maturana & Varela, 1980). So Duane asks:

Q. Who is most upset by this problem?

A. Jane.

Q. What does Jane do when she is upset?

A. She cries.

Q. Who sympathizes with her most when she cries?

A. Andrew.

Q. Who becomes most guilty when she cries?

A. Cindy.

Q. Who becomes stuck when Andrew sympathizes with Jane?

A. Lucy.

As a result of these questions, the group coalitions around a problem may start to be revealed, not merely to the director, but to the members themselves. These coalitions are *the* business of the group around which most of its dynamics run. Duane wants to create the possibility of alternative epistemologies about the group, new ways in which people make meaning. He also seeks an increase in "membership" in the problem and greater freshness and spontaneity. Fighting itself, apparently a spontaneous enough activity, may actually have become part of the group's linear hypothesis and is therefore a rigid rather than a spontaneous response. Duane's questions, accordingly, are designed to provoke new possibilities, new thought, new angles, and new emotional states. They invite "objective" group cohesion (by crossing over alliances and coalitions) and enhance member differentiation and creativity. That is, the aim of strategic sociometry is similar to the aims of most psychodramatic work—the development of spontaneity and the creation of new roles. But the whole group moves to these new roles in a coevolutionary fashion; the old roles become "impossible" to hold in the group. Duane's intervention is based on three principles: coevolution, responsiveness to difference, and shifting the frame of thought.

Coevolution

In any ecology, all elements are in relationship and continually accommodate to each other (Bateson, 1972). A group quickly forms a kind of ecology and as quickly requires a concept of coevolution for it to change. Rather than a simple linear notion of individual growth, or even one of group-minus-leader growth, a total concept of group-and-leader is required. Once the group has formed, the director and group attempt to coevolve. Ecologically speaking, if one changes, the others must adjust.

Duane's questions are formulated in the light of hypotheses about holistic patterns within the system. He assumes that if the group as a whole makes progress, every member of it must also make progress (Kibel & Stein, 1981). A radical version of this adage would be that it is impossible for a group member to make progress in the group unless the group as a whole makes progress—no evolution without coevolution. We are more used to the corollary of this hypothesis: Given that everyone in the group is connected in a circuit of interaction, if anyone in the group (including the director) makes progress, then everyone else will too. This familiar way of thinking tends to neglect the possibility that the group may stop anyone from making progress unless it, itself, is able to find new roles to deal with the change.

Duane is attempting to illustrate a notion of reciprocity among the

members. He describes the behavior of one group member and asks another to comment on the reactions of other group members to it. More heretically still, according to some circles of therapy, Duane sometimes even asks person A to assign *responsibility* to C, D, E, F, or G for person B's behavior. For example, he once said to Richard, "You are acting very depressed today" (describes behavior) and then immediately turned to another member and asked: "Sally, who in the group is most responsible for keeping Richard depressed?" (assigns responsibility).

After a few answers, the whole group can be invited to go into action so that Richard's depression is not treated as an isolated or purely personal event. "Everyone, form a sculpture around Richard to show the ways you keep him depressed." This could be followed by another instruction: "Now form a sculpture to show how Richard stops you doing anything to change this."

This procedure is based on a different philosophy from that espoused by many contemporary fulfillment psychologies, such as gestalt therapy, that urge ever more responsibility for the self. Instead, the method advocated here continually places a context around the self of other people's reactions or anticipations, what Moreno calls "the invisible tele-structures which influence his position" (1953, p. 95). Duane's perceptual test assumes that all roles are interpersonal, consisting not only of cognition, affect, and behavior, but also of context and effect. What is the effect of Richard's depression? What is the interpersonal context (the group) in which it takes place? Who does Richard hope to influence by his depression?

The assumption that Richard's depression is not merely an internal matter sounds at first risky, or even crazy, but if asked, most members will make some sense out of it. The meaning that they assign will usually concern their own lack of spontaneity in their behavior to Richard. Perhaps they "walk on eggshells"; perhaps they also have become depressed; perhaps they have become very jolly. Some might see that, rather than containing Richard's depression by their sympathy, they were, in fact, being "controlled" by Richard, who somehow "made" them suppress their spontaneous reactions. Or perhaps Richard is trying to help the group in some way by being depressed, a way he may have learned in his family of origin. The questions induce a different way of thinking about events in the group.

Old patterns of thinking and feeling are inevitably revised in a coevolutionary framework. The context of a member's behavior is established as paramount, intricately connected with the behavior of all the other members. So-called pathology becomes seen as a form of social interaction. The person involved and the group are defined by the nature of the questions as producing the best solution possible, as they see it. So Richard

might see the solution to his problems as “be depressed,” and the group might see the solution to the problem that Richard’s depression poses for them as “walk on eggshells.” When these adopted solutions are exposed, other solutions become possible for all.

Coevolutionary thinking also applies when a person shows heightened spontaneity and flexibility. The social context of our actions is not confined to troubling behavior. People actually do enhance each other’s well-being and help create new and splendid roles. At such times, instead of simply noting the changes to the person involved (“It’s great that you’re participating more, Jane”) the director can congratulate the whole group for the person’s new-found freedom and ask the group what they, rather than the individual concerned, did to bring it about.

Tom, who in the group made most space for Jane to participate?

Who is most pleased that she has?

Who do you think will be next to participate more fully?

People thus learn about reciprocity of relationships—“we have helped X change by changing ourselves as we relate to her.” Praise and blame begin to lose meaning in favor of an understanding that action always takes place in context.

Difference

What people respond to is difference or change. These changes must be dramatic in some way in order to be noticed. Bateson (1982, pp. 108–109) observed that people find it difficult to detect gradual change because they become habituated and unaware of slow alterations. A person scarcely notices the differences in light through the year as the seasons change; but he or she would notice if it suddenly grew dark at 5 P.M. in the middle of summer. To be perceptible, change must be of sufficient magnitude or sufficient suddenness so that its difference makes an impact.

Asking a question about the difference in how Cindy and Lucy regard Judith’s behavior attracts awareness to that difference. If Bateson is right, Cindy can only understand her behavior in terms of difference from someone else (although the person chosen need not necessarily be Lucy—that will depend on the director’s hypothesis), or difference between now and at some time in the past, or between now and some time in the future. For differences to become “information,” they must be differences that make a difference. The director triggers the release of information by inquiring about differences. Duane’s questions have most chance of making a difference if they confirm or disconfirm a specific and systemic hypothesis that he is generating as he watches the group in action.

One shape that “difference” questions can take is the before or after form. That is, the comparisons can relate to changes in the mood state of the group or to changes in “hidden sociometry” after a particular event. For example, suppose the group seems tense and flighty, but Duane does not know what has triggered this state. His strategic sociometry could run something like the following:

Q. When did the problem in the group begin?

Jill. Three weeks ago.

Q. What else was happening two weeks ago?

Jill. Sandy didn’t turn up for two sessions in a row.

Q. Who missed her most?

Jill. Judith and Bob and Cindy.

Q. Who had the hardest time adjusting?

Mike. Bob.

Q. Why?

Mike. She drives home with him when the group is finished, and they talk.

Q. Who in the group most wished they didn’t do that?

Jill. You, Duane, (laughter) and Carol and Cindy.

Q. Andrew, do you agree with Jill that I and Carol and Cindy are most against Sandy and Bob driving home together?

The event of Sandy missing the group two times in a row has become tied into a system of relationships and triangles that tend to be the “secrets” of the group. Particular contents of the group secrets are not so important as who shares the secrets. Thus Judith, Bob, and Cindy are linked in that they all missed Sandy for various reasons. In the example, these reasons were not explored, but they could have been. Bob and Sandy have a “driving home” alliance where, presumably, many opinions are shared. The people who are thought most to object to this alliance (including the director) are identified, and the reasons why they object could also be gone into. Alternatively, a new set of alliances over the same issue can be explored from a different angle. For example: “Who doesn’t give a damn that Bob drives home with Sandy?” “How do you explain that X doesn’t give a damn?” The why questions are not so much designed to diagnose people’s motivations as to uncover the unexpressed values of the group on the issue (the group myth). The myth might be that the group will come to some harm if Bob and Sandy drive home together. It is then important to search out the alliances around this belief—who believes it, who does not. Who agrees with whom?

Group members can be asked to shape their comments to each other in terms of differences rather than absolute judgments. The information relevant to people in a group is usually called feedback. Feedback that is given early in a group is generally of the order of “you are X” or “you are Y.” For example, someone might say, “You are defensive, Bob,” or

"You are completely cut off from your feelings, Cindy." That is, the giver of the feedback makes an assumption that he or she is an objective judge of the other person's behavior. This form of feedback is not highly regarded in therapeutic circles, although, for some clients or patients, the ability to make any direct statement to another person may be considered a step in the right direction.

Later, after careful tutelage from the leader, the nature of the feedback is likely to change. The feedback "I see you doing such and such" is linked with self-disclosure—"this is how I experience myself." Members begin to express themselves in "I statements" that are incorporated into the "you statements" of feedback. That is, comments are couched in terms of the reaction to the other person: "When you are silent, Bob, I feel like I'm hammering on a locked door," or "When I talk to you, Cindy, I can feel the life draining away from me." This type of comment blending feedback and self-disclosure is expressed in terms of a relationship. Such commentary is more recursive than simple feedback or simple self-disclosure and is usually regarded as beneficial for the giver and receiver alike.

This paper has argued for relationship as the form by which people know things. Strategic sociometry extends but by no means replaces relationship-style feedback. In one of our earlier examples, when Judith was fighting with Leah, the relationship between Cindy and Lucy is gathered together around the event. Their reactions are compared in terms of one or the other being more upset when Judith gets angry. The comment by Bob produces complex feedback to Cindy, to Lucy, to Judith, and to Leah on their impact on the system and the system's impact on them. Moreover, as the comment is made in comparative terms, it is presumably more intelligible than some sort of absolute judgment, such as "you are shy" or "you are suspicious," in which the receiver is left with a problem of meaning. Just how shy, how suspicious is one? What does it mean? Compare these statements with "you are shyer/more suspicious than you used to be" or "than Cindy is." These concepts are more manageable than when expressed in absolute terms. The comparisons with before or after or with Cindy are not meant to engender competition but merely to create meaning.

Shifting the Frame of Thought

When strategic directors fashion a criterion, they tend to connote the contexts of events positively. Positive connotation brings new information to the group by shifts in the framework of the leader's and the members' thinking (the belief aspects of their roles). Sociometric criteria do

not merely elicit information about groupings around a certain point; they also actually introduce concepts. (Who would be the first to recognize that Judith gets angry because she cares too much rather than too little?) The new concept in that example is "caring too much." A strategic criterion might, for instance, embed the notion of volition as against things just happening: "When Judith *decided* to get angry. . . ." "When did Richard *make up his mind* to be depressed?" Other concepts such as "caring for others when they are distressed," or "curiosity," or "courage" can be introduced by questions such as "who in the group is most *curious* about what will happen next?" This provides a helpful connotation for negative and pathologizing labels such as "sympiotic depression," "anticipatory anxiety," and the like.

Criteria can also be selected on the grounds of people's grouping around an event and not merely an emotional state. For example, Sandy's absence can be reconstrued as "leaving the group on the shelf," so that the group's former anger at the "abandonment" element of the absence can take on a new light. Other events, such as arguments, can also become the subject of surprising criteria, as has been seen. The surprisingness of the criteria, the possibility of being completely lateral to conventional therapeutic wisdom and the clichés of personal improvement, can carry considerable therapeutic power and demand a spontaneous response.

The frame shift can act as a brake on linear thinking and advice. Sometimes linear feedback ("you are X; you are Y") becomes a problem-maintaining rather than a problem-solving device. For example, Judith might traditionally receive feedback (covert advice) on whether she ought to be "more" or "less" angry. Now it may well be that she has already given herself plenty of feedback on this matter in her own self-talk, and has perhaps done so for years without getting very far. But if the question becomes "who in the group is most *relieved* when Judith gets mad?" the focus is shifted away from whether Judith should or should not control her temper. The new focus is the function of Judith's temper in the group. What does it do for Judith? What does it do for the group? The question of "relief" puts the outburst into a different frame. Judith can begin to see that her outbursts may be serving group needs, such as to be distracted, to be a victim, to be part of an aggressive interaction without seeming to be. The questions for her, then, become how much longer will she go on "serving" the group in this way, and what does being angry in this way do for her?

Simultaneously, the other members of the group have to deal with the event in a way that they have not dealt with it before. The feedback is multiple. The director is driving at a systemic reaction to the event—how the dyadic behavior between Judith and Leah is established and main-

tained by the group. Judith's anger and Leah's complaining can be seen as lifestyles of the group that may not be helping it with its essential goals. The sociometric criteria, then, are designed to uncover the "lifestyle support systems." If necessary, an actual classical sociogram can be constructed to validate or invalidate the perceptual criteria that have been used.

Therapy is concerned with change. In group therapy, change has the best chance of occurring when the support systems of dysfunctional lifestyles are challenged and undermined. Otherwise, it is the functional system that is challenged and undermined. If the group members are, in fact, relieved by the incident, the chances are that the anger outbursts will happen over and over again, much to Judith and Leah's bewilderment. It seems as if everyone is out of control—the principal actors and those who maintain them. Judith's individual desires to be less angry are not irrelevant, but sociometric criteria revealing relief in the group when she is angry may help her to see what she must confront in trying to be less angry; how the "we" influences the "I." Judith has become a sociometric star on the "anger-relief" criterion.

As for Leah, it would be very easy to become unhelpfully caught up in her misery if one looked only at her individual roles or even her dyadic roles with Judith. A strategic director, however, is most interested in Leah's group roles. When this set of roles is considered, the question of Leah's function in the system may become more intelligible. If Leah's major group roles were, say, scapegoat and victim, one of the important figures nominated as "most relieved when Judith gets angry" might be Leah herself. As a result of the information, Leah may recognize and wish to change her group function of scapegoat and victim.

Conclusion

Since its chief focus is on alliances, triangles, and subgroupings, strategic sociometry is most appropriately used in an established group or organization. It is not a way of running a group as such, but is intended as an occasional unlocking device for a system that has become stuck. Even if the group is stuck in "flight," the questions can be asked as to who is most eager to flee, who least eager, who is joining whom in escape, and who is next likely to put up a device to distract someone from pain.

It has been the purpose of this paper to suggest that a stuck group needs new information to help it change. The "new information" is, in fact, not so new. The group "knows" what the alliances are but does not know that it knows until asked. Covert alliances and hierarchies in the

group, when uncovered by relevant questioning, tend to lose their potency. The alliances had been supported and energized by being out of conscious awareness and certainly out of spoken awareness. Revealing the relationship networks in the group tends to shift old, and possibly stuck, habits of thinking.

The release of information, especially information concerning differences, is intended to produce change in itself. By defining its own system anew, the system is enabled to move on (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Parry, 1984). The sociometric questions are based on particular hypotheses and lead to confirmation or nullification of those hypotheses. Strategic sociometry is not a permanent way of running a group, however. It is an intervention. It does not of itself lead to action, though as has been indicated, there are plenty of outlets to action along the way if the director sees fit.

Strategic sociometry leads the group to a very quiet form of spontaneity. After a run of strategic questions, members tend to be calm and ready to get on with whatever the group has gathered together to do. The spontaneity involved seems to be a new way of thinking that clears the way for new emotional interactions. It is a "cool" rather than a "hot" medium, even though the issues involved—alliances, including alliances with the leader—is the hottest topic a group can touch (Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964; Yalom, 1975).

In the author's experience, the method appears to do one thing well: It provides multiple perspectives that clear the group for work. The group seems no longer to operate as a "basic assumption" group but as a "work" group (Bion, 1961). That is, the group can complete the tasks for which it was constituted, whether these be therapy, training, or the achievement of particular goals. After a successful run of strategic questions, the group does seem to achieve what it had intended in the first place. The passions tied up by alliances and secrets are cooler, for a while anyway. Dysfunctional interactions based upon incapacitating fears, anger, jealousy, and hierarchical anxieties seem a little irrelevant to the group members at this stage, and there may be no particular established warm-up. In view of the fact that many people consider their current system, even when based on anxiety, to be more interesting than their spontaneous system, and therapy more interesting than real life, to "leave" the basic assumption group for the work group involves some sacrifice. It is, after all, to leave the known for the unknown.

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Gertrude Stein and a companion

Echoes of Moreno

On reading Zerka Moreno's "Let performers actually perform" (*Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Summer 1987), I warmed up to reflecting on a play that I saw a short while ago, *Gertrude Stein and a Companion* by the American-born writer and poet Win Wells, performed at the Universal Theater in Melbourne, Victoria.

The play opened with a very alive "dead Gertrude Stein" soliloquizing about her death. "Alice B. Toklas" entered and also began soliloquizing about Gertrude's death. Enactment and dialogue proceeded between the "dead Gertrude" and the "alive Alice."

There were other vignettes recounting various times in their lives when Gertrude was alive, including a humorous rendition by "Alice," enacting the role of Gertrude's brother when he was faced with Picasso's pictures, and by "Gertrude" playing the role of an American journalist who interviewed her and Alice when they were on a visit to America.

At the end of the play, the "dead Gertrude" and "90-year-old Alice" held hands and Gertrude commented that dead is dead and gone is gone. She did, however, wonder to Alice whether their relationship wouldn't go on forever.

Did Win Wells know about J. L. Moreno's sociometry and psychodrama . . . ?

SUE DANIEL
Melbourne, Australia

Psychodrama for the Aged

In this age of advanced technology, Japanese society faces a new challenge. The proportion of the population of people aged 60 and over is rapidly increasing. Recent statistics show that 15% of the population is aged 60 or above. In addition, the average life span is increasing. Today, a Japanese woman can expect to live until the age of 80. For men, the figure is 76. The challenge facing Japan today is how to improve the quality of life for these aged people. The question is not how long do we live but how do we live.

The most important task is the prevention of illnesses that frequently accompany old age. Public health centers are trying an educational approach to prevent heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. Older people have free time and enjoy attending such meetings. Unfortunately, they are not used to just sitting and listening to lectures. They prefer to be more actively involved. Therefore, new and more interesting educational techniques need to be used in order to increase the effectiveness of these educational programs.

In my opinion, psychodrama may be an effective method. Older people are often depressed about their future. They feel dependent on others and useless to society. By using psychodrama, however, we can help older people recapture the memories of the past and bring them to life again. We can help them understand that their past is a treasure and from it they have many jewels of wisdom and experience to share with society.

Hajime Mashino, M.D., *Utsunomiya University*, in the January 1987 issue of *The Official Journal of the Japan Association of Group Psychotherapy*.

INDEX TO VOLUME 40

- Austin, Ann M. Berghout: Young Children's Attention to Dyadic Conversation as Modified by Sociometric Status. Summer, p. 62.
- Blatner, Adam: Book Review of *Invisible Guests: The Development of Imaginal Dialogue* by Mary Watkins. Summer, p. 81.
- Blatner, Adam, and Allee Blatner: The Metaphysics of Creativity as Reflected in Moreno's Metapraxis and the Mystical Tradition. Winter, p. 156.
- Bozarth, Jerold D.: Book Review of *Drama Therapy: Concepts and Practices* by Robert J. Landy. Spring, p. 45.
- Estes, D. B.: VAKTO, A Tool for Improving Directorial Skills. Spring, p. 43.
- Grundy, Dominick: Book Review of *Every Person's Life Is Worth a Novel* by Erving Polster. Summer, p. 82.
- Hale, Ann E.: New Developments in Sociometry. Fall, p. 119.
- Hale, Ann E.: Sociometric Elements Related to the "Healing Circle" as Presented by John Mosher. Fall, p. 115.
- Hart, Joe W.: The Sociometric Vision and Research Productivity. Fall, p. 91.
- Hurme, Pirkko: Experiences of Psychodrama Courses. Spring, p. 3.
- Kellermann, Peter Felix: A Proposed Definition of Psychodrama. Summer, p. 76.
- Klein, Ronald Jack, Elizabeth M. Hawkins, and Isadore Newman: The Measurement of Social Support: The Use of the Social Support Questionnaire as a Means of Examining Differences Between Acute and Chronic Hospitalized Psychiatric Patients. Spring, p. 19.
- Kipper, David A.: On the Definition of Psychodrama: Another View. Winter, p. 164.
- Newburger, Howard M.: The Covert Psychodrama of Phobias. Spring, p. 33.
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