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# Psychodrama as a Preventive Measure: Teenage Girls Confronting Violence

JOSEPHINE FONG

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**ABSTRACT.** The problem of male violence against women has affected the lives of many women since ancient times. Women are victims of child sexual abuse, date rape, marital assault, marital rape, and sexual harassment. In this article, the author describes an innovative approach to combat violence by employing techniques generally used in drama therapy and psychodrama. Such work is aimed at increasing young women's awareness of violence, enhancing their agency in preventing and dealing with violent situations, and engaging them to take part in educating their peers on issues of male violence. High-school girls ( $N = 19$ ) participated in weekly sessions for 6 months. Empowered by the group director, the young women staged 2 productions in schools, sharing their insights with more than 200 peers.

**Keywords:** preventing violence, psychodrama techniques, teenage girls

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IN A TYPICAL YEAR, 120 WOMEN IN CANADA ARE KILLED by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1993), and almost 450,000 are smacked, punched, strangled, beaten, sexually assaulted, or threatened with a gun or a knife (Statistics Canada, 1994). Also, results of an in-depth study show that across the country, approximately 80% of victims of criminal harassment are women (Bunge & Levett, 1998). All the data indicate that women are constantly victimized. Feminist advocates and community activists have helped to incriminate most types of assault and encourage more women to take the perpetrators to court. However, because of loopholes in the existing judicial system and because many incidents against women are unreported, many offenders either are never arrested or are acquitted when they go to trial. Even though some perpetrators are found guilty, a light sentence often disappoints the victims and their families. As a result, violent crimes

against women have not declined, and many women feel revictimized by the legal process. Indeed, a recent news release from Statistics Canada reported that the number of spousal homicides against women increased from 68 in 2000 to 86 in 2001 (Spousal Homicide, 2002).

Some feminists argue that the frequent portrayal of women as victims of male crimes has led to destructive effects on women's psyches (Rushing, 1993). The continuous depiction of women as victims directly and indirectly implies that they are incapable of defending themselves or combating male violence on their own. This construal of women as passive victims of violent crimes has cultivated a sense of powerlessness in them, trapping them in the dynamic of self-fulfilling prophecy. This portrayal of women denies their sense of agency, discouraging them from taking full control of their lives and forcing them to withdraw themselves from meaningful activities. Many women are hesitant to go out at night for purposes of personal advancement and social networking. Some studies show that many women totally avoid going to certain places by themselves, even during the day (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Even when they go out, they cannot fully enjoy activities because fears overtake pleasure. To advise women not to go out alone after dark is an act of disempowerment. It deprives them of their basic human right to live life to the fullest as a person; at the same time, it further jeopardizes their chances to acquire more effective strategies to deal with violent situations. Violent experiences, conventional advice, and anticipation of victimization limit women's opportunities for personal development.

Unless it is an informed personal choice, women do not need to limit their social activities or give up opportunities for personal growth because of the threat of violence. To empower women, helping professionals can take a more proactive approach toward helping women fight violence. Johnson and Lewis (2000) stated that most drama therapists discover the exciting possibilities of drama therapy by experience, not theory, so the possibility of employing the processes and techniques of drama therapy and psychodrama to help women overcome fears of male violence is promising. It has been long established that dramatization elements can bring great therapeutic effects to people's lives, and one of the important aspects of drama therapy is public performance (Emunah, 1994). Torre (1990) reported successful results after conducting a drama project with women to raise their consciousness about stressful connections between the workplace and the home. The Community Education Team (1999) also reported a project involving drama facilitators who collaborated with junior high and high school students in creating skits on topics related to relationship violence. These researchers obtained some positive results as well. In examining these projects, I was convinced that it is appropriate to introduce the processes and techniques of drama therapy and psychodrama to help increase women's awareness of male

violence and to empower them to develop applicable strategies for various violent situations.

*Psychodrama* is defined as “a scientific exploration of truth through dramatic method” (Moreno, 1953, p. 81). It is widely recognized as a form of psychotherapy in which the participants enact or reenact situations that bear emotional significance for them. Signified in the word *psychodrama* is the expression of an individual’s intellectual and emotional processes through speech and body movement. In typical psychodrama sessions, clients are directed to act out different personalities that are significant to them. In a group situation, each member is the therapeutic agent of the other, contributing to each other’s transformation and personal growth. The major components of each psychodrama session include warm-up, action, and sharing (Kahn, 1964). Such techniques and processes help participants obtain insights into their own personalities and feelings as well as those of others.

All individuals involved in psychodrama, including the therapist, are theoretically able to recognize certain problems of their own in the process; therefore, psychodrama is not confined to people whose problems are pathological. Indeed, psychodrama can benefit anyone who keeps an open mind and seeks new alternatives to matters in life. Because drama therapy is interdisciplinary in nature, its methods and techniques are very diverse. The therapist uses techniques of improvisation and theatrical sensibility to work with individuals who would benefit from such work. Dramatic roles can be used as a vehicle for not only experiencing and integrating new aspects of one’s life, but also expressing suppressed shadow aspects of the self. In this way, facets of a person’s personality that have been concealed from others and, more often, from the self can be unleashed (Emunah, 1994).

Drama therapy and psychodrama are forms of healing art that share commonalities in the therapeutic process. Many studies show that people of various age ranges can take advantage of psychodrama or drama therapy, but it is most effective when it is used with adolescents (Dayton, 1990; Emunah, 1985). The need for adolescents to make sense of the world and to develop interpersonal skills through dramatic modes is great in the educational system. Pickering (1997) pointed out that, in developing personalities, teenagers are likely to experience a full range of emotional and social complexities. Drama lessons or therapeutic sessions provide them the opportunity to release strong emotions with guidance. A young person who experienced psychodrama said, “I learned to trust in our psychodrama group. I can’t remember the last time I trusted anyone” (Bannister, 1991). One significant reason for such success with adolescents is that psychodrama connects the natural healing methods that are used by children through plays and role plays. This connection makes it easier for them to discharge internal impulses through enactment and to gain insights. Evidence shows that, when researchers use such techniques in



the educational system, students as young as seventh graders can understand complex issues of violence against women and think proactively about ways in which violent situations can be approached tactically (Community Education Team, 1999). On a psychodramatic stage, participants can have their anxieties, fears, and tensions relieved, and their attention can be shifted to focus on developing meaningful surviving strategies.

## **Method**

### *Program Background and Goals*

Get on to Stopping Violence Against Women was a project I designed that was funded by the United Way of Greater Toronto, Canada, as a preventive and educational program to empower the minds of young women of high-school age. Through this project, I worked with the Canadian Information and Community Services (CICS) as group director to enhance these young women's abilities to deal with violent circumstances in their surroundings. I used psychodrama as a tool to help the girls overcome anxieties about violence, to unlearn fear and gender stereotypes that weakened their psychological strengths, and to restore their spontaneity in responding to violent situations. In the case of preparing young women to deal with male violence on a daily basis, I believed it was pivotal to help them reduce a sense of victimization and develop a sense of self-reliance. Instead of reinforcing a sense of helplessness and hopelessness in them, I believed the best way to empower them was to encourage them to develop practical and useful strategies that would prevent them from being targeted for abuse and victimization. Only when there is a thorough understanding of social dynamics and gender issues and an opportunity to reconstruct an improved self-image can young women be better prepared to deal with male violence on their own in their lives.

### *Participants*

The Get on to Stopping Violence Against Women project engaged young women from 15 years to 20 years of age (Grades 9–12) who were studying in a formal school. I recruited 19 students from two high schools in Toronto, Ontario, with the help of their teachers or resettlement workers in school. Students volunteered themselves but were referred by the aforementioned individuals, because I was not a regular member in their school. For those who were minors, I obtained consent from their parents. All participants were coincidentally immigrants, and many of them were recent newcomers to Canada. Although some students spoke English effortlessly, many of them were just managing to speak it and using great effort to express their opinions



and emotions effectively. The composition of the group was culturally diverse, including Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Russian, Iranian, and Ukrainian students. However, being immigrants and newcomers had provided these young women with a sense of togetherness, as if they were sharing an equivalent identity, even though their backgrounds were different in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Also, the uniqueness of the newcomer experience had prepared the participants to be more open and ready for learning. They looked forward to discovering new resources in their immediate environment and finding ways of empowering themselves through participation in such an extracurricular activity.

### *Procedure*

Once I identified objectives and communicated them to group members, the group met weekly for 2 hr over the course of 20 sessions. In accordance with concepts of drama therapy and psychodrama, I believed that, through the enactment of emotions expressed in body movements, gestures, and even dancing and singing in group sessions, anybody who could function well socially and emotionally would be able to benefit from the activities and gain a deeper knowledge about the self. Therefore, I required no detailed assessment or analysis of the participants' psychological personalities prior to the commencement of the group sessions.

In addition to regular warm-up activities, action, and sharing, I advised participants to write down personal goals for future assessment and to keep a journal for recording personal growth. As the group director, I used some of these entries on self-discoveries, personal doubts, or concerns to provide participants individual feedback, to bring common concerns to group discussion, or to develop relevant cases for group activities. The young women were shy in the beginning of the project, but gradually they became open to playing different roles in the staged social contexts and interpersonal relationships. It was also in this stage that I helped them bond with each other despite their differences. I introduced acting games and exercises to help participants to loosen up and gain confidence in expressing emotions through acting and to build a group identity. When group cohesiveness was established, group members were ready to work with each other, and they felt comfortable articulating their views about male violence without fear of being judged by peers. Storytelling was a relevant exercise I used in this phase to ease participants' minds when talking about violence. With this technique, I instructed members to tell a short story as a group before they gave an account of a violent incident.

In the project's second phase, I presented the educational and skills development elements more intensively. I initiated some serious discussion on

different types and topics of male violence, such as random sexist crimes, date rape, incest, sexual harassment, spousal and child abuse, and racial violence. I encouraged participants to speak their minds and offer strategic solutions to the problems. For example, from a box containing notes with unknown situations, participants randomly drew a violent situation, and then I asked them to use their imaginations to role-play the situation both as a perpetrator and as a victim. To help them overcome psychological barriers and visualize their abilities in responding effectively to a violent scene, I developed a simple empowerment dance, which integrated the idea that women are strong, calm, intelligent, and confident. The group practiced the dance in each session to reinforce the belief that women are capable agents and that they can deal with violent situations innovatively. I frequently encouraged participants to enact the strategies they invented. Members often provided each other with moral support and constructive feedback to sharpen ideas and improvise strategies.

In the third phase, I shifted the emphasis of the sessions from individual creativity to group creativity. Group processes provided members with opportunities for collective creativity. For example, they recreated the dance that I originally choreographed, incorporating their ideas and personal styles. As a result, the empowering dance became a collective production that signified the group's shared willpower to confront violence. In addition, I gave members the opportunity to reenact violent situations that we had discussed. Situations included sexual harassment on the bus and in the mall. Participants gradually integrated those isolated incidents into a story with a personally relevant social context, making them the working script for public performance. Near the end of the sessions, I selected three scenarios (two girls nearly sexually assaulted in an elevator, a girl being stalked at night, and bullying among peers in school) as rehearsal materials for the purpose of peer education—the performance.

In the final phase, I worked with members to consolidate their learning and prepare them for the performance. After overcoming their anxiety about public performance, these young women were ready to show what they had learned and to teach their peers ways to protect themselves from violence. They were very excited about the performance and wanted their peers to be proud of them. At this point, the group entered its maturity; members knew how to respect differences among themselves and how to work with each other. Ongoing negotiation and compromise with each other led them to the decision of including the dance in the performance as well. In this phase, they volunteered themselves for unique roles in the various scenarios, requiring no intervention or mediation from me. In anticipation of questions, some members came up with mock answers, which again showed their personal growth and achievement over the course of the sessions.

### *Final Performance*

Participants presented their performance twice in the two different schools to which they belonged. Between the two performances, 120 female students in Grades 10 and 11 attended the presentations. During the question and answer (Q & A) period, intriguing dialogues emerged about the need for more radical strategies if an attack becomes vicious. Although no consensus could be reached, the message was clearly conveyed to the audience that women must act proactively and develop the confidence necessary to deal with violent situations. Participants reported that the most empowering aspect of the process was the ample opportunity to reflect on self-doubts, personal beliefs, and new knowledge that was generated from this experience. Reenacting their performance in front of people other than their group peers and standing up for their beliefs in the Q & A period challenged these young women to demonstrate their personal strength, calmness, intelligence, and confidence. These were the personal qualities that I sought to instill in participants in this project.

## **Results**

### *Participant Evaluations*

The participants' evaluations showed that they had expanded their horizons and learned about women's right and ability to stop violence. At the beginning of the project, newcomer participants said they hoped to make more friends, to feel good about themselves, to improve their English skills, to reduce anxiety about violence, and to gain personal confidence. They seemed to have reached most of these goals at the end of the project. They reported feelings of success because they had achieved more than just their individual goals; they were happy with their accomplishment as a group as well. They felt privileged to have had the opportunity to express their fears and face them with the help of peers and a professional. They found the educational sessions, the theater exercises, and the games to be informative and, as an bonus, they learned about critical thinking skills and community resources. The anticipation of a group presentation to a school audience had attracted some young women to attend regularly with no absence. The following statement expresses a sentiment that appeared in many participants' evaluations: "Confidence is most important to me because sometimes I am not confident. I'm shy. But in this project, I've gained confidence."

Many participants reported that, after joining this group, they talked more with others in school or in their social circles about issues of violence. They were proud of the final performance and were more aware that women do not have to tolerate violence. One participant stated, "I always thought that girls

can't do anything but freak out in situations like what we discussed; but now I feel knowledgeable to say that there are a lot of strategies women can use to get out of certain situations." Indeed, many participants identified with the protagonists they created in the scenarios, and they admired the calmness, courage, and confidence that the characters demonstrated in situations of sexual and racial assault.

The rapport established between the participants and myself in this program was very strong, promoting fast changes in participants. With my expertise and commitment to empower women, I had gone through similar experiences as these young women had, being a member of a racial minority group, a non-White, and a female immigrant. Thus, I could empathize from a personal angle and handle sensitive issues tactically and effectively. Personal identity (be it racial or otherwise) played an important role in the shared feeling of sisterhood that helped bridge psychological gaps and create a sense that "we are all in the same boat." This sense of community was demonstrated by the way group cohesiveness was swiftly established among members after they realized that they were all immigrants.

### *Audience Evaluations*

We collected evaluation forms from the school audience after the presentations. Ninety percent of the students in the audience found the presentation to be thought provoking; only 10% stated that they were not sure what to comment. A conversation with the school administrator suggested that students in the latter group might contain newcomers who had problems expressing themselves on paper because of language barriers and were not familiar with the practice of giving feedback and those who simply did not care. A majority of audience members who praised the presentation described the strategies that were presented as "very useful" or "useful." The most impressive result was that most students were able to recite the four elements of a woman's personal quality that we stressed throughout the presentation: (a) personal strength, (b) calmness, (c) intelligence, and (d) confidence. They saw these concepts in the opening dance, and the scenarios further elaborated them. This success in transmitting our message to audience members demonstrated that, when concepts are conveyed through creative art, they are likely to be retained.

Many students in the audience reported that their awareness about violence was raised by the performance. They perceived that young women need to be more alert and daring, always thinking proactively about how they can protect themselves from violent situations. They expressed the desire for self-defense lessons and a violence-free environment. They acknowledged that, if they do not act as if they are scared, especially if they have rehearsed the appropriate responses, then they are more likely to be able to control the situation. The

audience found the discussion following the presentation to be necessary and helpful because the suggested coping strategies were expanded. After all, the primary aim of the presentation was not to show off group members' theater skills or suggest a set of stagnant strategies. It was about helping them consolidate their learning by conducting an educational presentation that empowered both performers and audience members. About half of the respondents expressed an interest in participating in similar projects in the future because they had witnessed the benefit of empowerment in this prevention program. This result suggests that the creative approach to combating violence was valuable to its regular members and that there was a rippling effect from the presentation, engaging a wider audience to future participation.

### Discussion

Violence against women is still a social reality that calls for our attention to defend against it. In spite of the efforts of feminists, community activists, and concerned citizens to eradicate violence, many women, regardless of age, race, ability, and religion, still suffer from physical, sexual, and mental abuse. The current judicial system does not permit male violence against women to go unpunished, but acceptance of male domination and assumptions of female compliance still remain. As a result, women's personal development may be hampered. Many women, overtly or covertly, are forced to choose between living a full life by taking risks or limiting themselves by confinement.

Although there are services and pragmatic programs to help women deal with violence in their lives, these services are often reactive and passive, assuming that women are incapable of self-protection or that they need to be protected by a third party (e.g., men, the police). These aftermath services and traditional approaches to stopping male violence are not effective enough and cannot confront the problem alone. Citizens need something more proactive that empowers women so that they are better equipped to face dangerous situations and solve problems related to violence. The need for ground-breaking preventive and educational programs for women is pivotal in preventing women from believing that they are the weaker gender.

After experimenting with the techniques and approaches of psychodrama, using it as a tool to work with young women of high school age, and observing its positive results, I conclude that the use of creative and preventive measures to empower women and stop violence should be encouraged. Get on to Stopping Violence Against Women was a successful project. It not only was valued by program participants and rated highly by the audience, but also proved that, when women realized their inner strengths and personal power, they could see options and possibilities to handle violence strategically. It is more important that new insights of one individual could generate more

insights in a group of young women and in a larger student population. The conventional wisdom of “An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of remedies” applies here.

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JOSEPHINE FONG derived this study from her professional engagement with Canadian Information and Community Services and presented the results at the 60th Psychodrama Conference of the American Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, New York City, September 2002. She is an adjunct professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University in Toronto. Her e-mail address is jfong@yorku.ca.

# Using Dance Cards to Facilitate the Sharing Phase in Sociometric Explorations

EVA V. SWENSON

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**ABSTRACT.** The author considers sociometric explorations that, at some point, require each group member to share information with every other group member in sequence. In this sharing phase, a facilitator usually directs the group to form new pairs at the start of each time period, leaving it to the members to find their next partners. Moments of chaos often result in which members have to switch to new partners, creating anxiety for members who do not find a partner and increased completion time for the sharing phase. The author describes *dance cards*, a structure that can enable the formation of such sequences of pairs to occur in an orderly and efficient manner.

**Keywords:** dance cards, partners, sociometric exploration

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A SOCIOMETRIC EXPLORATION (Hale, 1981), such as the sociometric test (Moreno, 1978) or the role-accessibility perception test (Hale, 1995), generally starts with the group picking a criterion that will form the basis of the exploration. After a criterion is picked, group members write down their choices of other group members on the basis of that criterion and then make perceptual guesses about choices others make for themselves on the basis of the same criterion. This *data-generation phase* is followed by a *sharing phase*. In the sharing phase, group members spend a specified amount of time in face-to-face dyads to directly and personally reveal their choice of one another and their perceptions. The minimum amount of time usually needed for each pairing, or time period, is 4–5 min. At the end of each time period,



everyone finds another partner with whom to share information. The sharing phase extends over a number of time periods until every group member has met in a dyad with every other group member.

In the sharing phase, a facilitator usually directs the group to form new pairs at the start of each time period, leaving it to the members to find their next partners. Common consequences of such randomly formed pairs are (a) periods of confusion at the start of each time period while everyone tries to find another partner, akin to what happens in musical chairs; (b) longer time periods to accommodate members' finding partners; (c) some members' forfeiting a time period while waiting to talk with the same individual; (d) more time periods to ensure that every possible pairing has occurred; and (e) more people's forfeiting one or more time periods because they have already shared with everyone or because the remaining persons with whom they need to share are paired with others. See Table 1 for two examples of outcomes of random pairings. I have participated in sociometric explorations in which the sharing phase was conducted in this way. It felt chaotic and out of control, and I experienced some anxiety each time I had to find another partner. I occasionally found myself competing with another member for the same person, and when I could not find a partner and had to sit out during a time period, I blamed myself for not being fast enough; I felt isolated.

### **A Better Way to Manage Sequential Pairings**

In the field of discrete mathematics, there is an algorithm that can help with this situation. It specifies the pairings that should be formed in each time period so that the total number of periods can be kept to a minimum.

Algorithm: Suppose there are an even number of people,  $2k + 2$ :  $0, 1, \dots, 2k$  and on to infinity (*inf*). In the first period, they meet as follows: (*inf*, 0), (1,  $2k$ ), ( $2, 2k - 1$ ),  $\dots$ , ( $k, k + 1$ ). In the  $i$ th period, where  $i = 2, \dots, 2k + 1$ , add  $i - 1$  to each participant modulo  $(2k + 1)$  when necessary, excluding *inf*, which does not change. If the number of people is odd, an optimal schedule is obtained from the previous one by removing *inf*. Then in each period, one person will be idle.

To spare the reader the necessity of struggling with the application of this algorithm, I have generated the calculations for groups of various sizes and have presented the results as templates that can be used to generate what I call *dance cards*. Dance cards originated in the 18th century and came into widespread use in Vienna in the 19th century. They were used by women to record with whom they would dance each successive dance at a formal ball. In a sociometric exploration, dance cards tell holders with whom they should meet in each time period.

If these dance cards were used, the group of five in Table 1 would need only five time periods, and each of the members would sit out only once. The group of

**TABLE 1. Example Outcomes of Two Groups in Which Members Are Asked to Form Pairs With Every Other Member Without Further Instruction**

| Time period | Group of 5 people <sup>a</sup>    | Group of 6 people <sup>b</sup>     |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1           | A-C, B-E; D has no partner        | A-B, C-D, E-F                      |
| 2           | A-D, B-C; E has no partner        | A-C, B-D; C and F have no partners |
| 3           | A-E, B-D; C has no partner        | C-F, D-E; A and B have no partners |
| 4           | A-B, C-D; E has no partner        | A-D, C-E, B-F                      |
| 5           | C-E; A, B, and D have no partners | A-E, B-C, D-F                      |
| 6           | D-E; A, B, and C have no partners | A-F, B-E; C and D have no partners |

<sup>a</sup>Six time periods are required; each group member has to sit out twice.

<sup>b</sup>Six time periods are required; each group member has to sit out twice.

**TABLE 2. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Three**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C |
| 1           | —            | C | B |
| 2           | C            | — | A |
| 3           | B            | A | — |

*Note.* A dash indicates that the group member sat out for that time period.

six in Table 1 would similarly need only five time periods, and no member would have to sit out. In general, if there is an odd number of group members, every person will not have a partner for one period. In groups with an even number of members, each group member will have a new partner for each time period. The number of time periods needed is the same as the number of group members, if that number is odd, and is the number of group members minus one, if that number is even. See Table 2 for the template for groups of three members and Tables A1–A7 in the Appendix for templates for groups with 4–10 members.

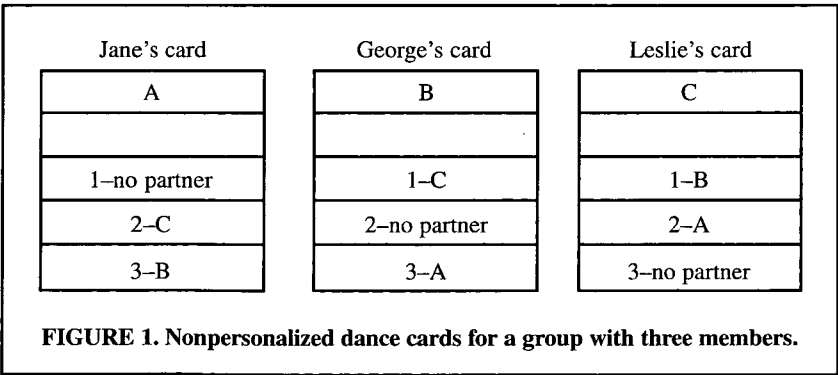
I used these cards at a recent sociometry workshop led by Ann E. Hale. Eighteen attendees participated in a role-accessibility perception test in which two criteria were explored. When a chime to mark the start of the next time period sounded, everyone switched partners speedily and smoothly because

each person knew who their next partner would be. Furthermore, group members knew at which period they would be without partners. This helped them to avoid the anxiety that can occur when one finds oneself without a partner. (Many people used this time as a washroom break.) Unless the point of the exercise is to discover one's feelings when trying to form pairs with others, using dance cards to organize sequential pairings reduces confusion and helps members to focus on the purpose of the sociometric exploration. Dance cards also help facilitators ensure that the sharing phase does not take more time than is necessary.<sup>1</sup> This was an important benefit to Anne Hale's sociometric-workshop group, given its size. Dance cards may be used in any group exercise that requires each group member to meet in pairs with every other group member to perform a specified action.

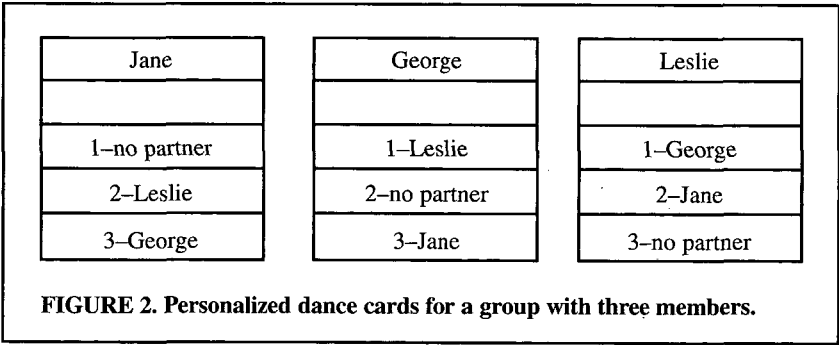
**How to Generate Dance Cards for a Group**

To produce dance cards, choose the table (see Table 2 and the Appendix) that matches the size of the group. Starting with the letter *A*, assign a letter to each member of the group and ask each to wear a tag with the letter prominently displayed. Then provide the person tagged *A* with a copy of the column in the table headed by the letter *A*. This is the dance card for Person *A*. Give the other members their dance cards (i.e., a copy of the column in the table headed by their respective letter tags). The dance cards tell the holders who their partners will be in each time period.

For example, to generate a set of dance cards for a group of three (Jane, George, and Leslie), start with the template shown in Table 2. Give Jane the tag with letter *A*, George the tag with *B*, and Leslie the tag with *C*. Then give Jane a card with a copy of the column headed *A*, give George a card with the column headed *B*, and give Leslie a card with the column headed *C*. Their dance cards are shown in Figure 1.



As an alternative, you may personalize the dance cards. If so, you will not need to ask members to wear tags displaying their respective letters, but you will need to prepare the dance cards ahead of time. Starting with the letter *A*, assign letters to each participant. To generate the dance card for each participant, start with a copy of the column headed by the letter you assigned to that participant. Replace each letter in that column with the name you assigned to that letter. In this example, I have assigned *A* to Jane, *B* to George, and *C* to Leslie. Their dance cards are shown in Figure 2.



Summary

In this article, I offered a tool that can be used by group facilitators to manage the sharing phase in sociometric explorations in an orderly and efficient manner. The tool enables a facilitator to give group members a dance card that tells them with whom they should meet in each time period of the sharing phase. I explained how a set of dance cards for a given group can be generated from the template that is specific to the size of the group and provided templates for groups of up to 10 members. Templates for groups with more than 10 members are available from the author.

NOTE

1. To calculate the amount of time needed for the sharing phase, multiply the number of minutes allotted per time period by the number of time periods that are needed. For example, for a group of 18, 17 time periods will be needed. If each pair is allotted 5 min to share, multiply  $17 \times 5$ . This means 85 min will be needed. If 1 min is desired between each sharing for people to locate their next partner and resettle, add 16 min. In large groups, facilitators might also want to add a 5-min break at the halfway point for everyone to relax on their own. The time for the sharing phase in this example would be  $85 + 16 + 5 = 106$  min.

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## APPENDIX

## DANCE CARD TEMPLATES FOR GROUPS WITH 4–10 MEMBERS

TABLE A1. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Four

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D |
| 1           | D            | C | B | A |
| 2           | C            | D | A | B |
| 3           | B            | A | D | C |

TABLE A2. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Five

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E |
| 1           | —            | E | D | C | B |
| 2           | C            | — | A | E | D |
| 3           | E            | D | — | B | A |
| 4           | B            | A | E | — | C |
| 5           | D            | C | B | A | — |

*Note.* A dash indicates that the group member sat out for that time period.

**TABLE A3. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Six**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E | F |
| 1           | F            | E | D | C | B | A |
| 2           | C            | F | A | E | D | B |
| 3           | E            | D | F | B | A | C |
| 4           | B            | A | E | F | C | D |
| 5           | D            | C | B | A | F | E |

**TABLE A4. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Seven**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E | F | G |
| 1           | —            | G | F | E | D | C | B |
| 2           | C            | — | A | G | F | E | D |
| 3           | E            | D | — | B | A | G | F |
| 4           | G            | F | E | — | C | B | A |
| 5           | B            | A | G | F | — | D | C |
| 6           | D            | C | B | A | G | — | E |
| 7           | F            | E | D | C | B | A | — |

*Note.* A dash indicates that the group member sat out for that time period.

**TABLE A5. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Eight**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
| 1           | H            | G | F | E | D | C | B | A |
| 2           | C            | H | A | G | F | E | D | B |
| 3           | E            | D | H | B | A | G | F | C |
| 4           | G            | F | E | H | C | B | A | D |
| 5           | B            | A | G | F | H | D | C | E |
| 6           | D            | C | B | A | G | H | E | F |
| 7           | F            | E | D | C | B | A | H | G |

**TABLE A6. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Nine**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| 1           | —            | I | H | G | F | E | D | C | B |
| 2           | C            | — | A | I | H | G | F | E | D |
| 3           | E            | D | — | B | A | I | H | G | F |
| 4           | G            | F | E | — | C | B | A | I | H |
| 5           | I            | H | G | F | — | D | C | B | A |
| 6           | B            | A | I | H | G | — | E | D | C |
| 7           | D            | C | B | A | I | H | — | F | E |
| 8           | F            | E | D | C | B | A | I | — | G |
| 9           | H            | G | F | E | D | C | B | A | — |

*Note.* A dash indicates that the group member sat out for that time period.

**TABLE A7. Template for Generating Dance Cards for a Group of Ten**

| Time period | Group member |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | A            | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
| 1           | J            | I | H | G | F | E | D | C | B | A |
| 2           | C            | J | A | I | H | G | F | E | D | B |
| 3           | E            | D | J | B | A | I | H | G | F | C |
| 4           | G            | F | E | J | C | B | A | I | H | D |
| 5           | I            | H | G | F | J | D | C | B | A | E |
| 6           | B            | A | I | H | G | J | E | D | C | F |
| 7           | D            | C | B | A | I | H | J | F | E | G |
| 8           | F            | E | D | C | B | A | I | J | G | H |
| 9           | H            | G | F | E | D | C | B | A | J | I |

# The Canon of Spontaneity–Creativity Revisited: The Effect of Empirical Findings

DAVID A. KIPPER

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**ABSTRACT.** The author examines J. L. Moreno's theory of spontaneity–creativity in light of recent empirical data reported in 3 studies using the Spontaneity Assessment Inventory (SAI) and the Spontaneity Deficit Inventory (SDI; A. Christoforou & D. A. Kipper, 2006; D. A. Kipper & J. Hundal, 2005; D. A. Kipper & W. A. Jones, 2005). The author focuses the discussion on the traditional depiction of the canon of spontaneity–creativity. In general, the data supports some of Moreno's hypotheses. However, after a review of Moreno's writing and the empirical findings, the author suggests that some modifications are needed in the earlier canon. In addition, he suggests that the canon needs to be expanded to include a description of the sequence that accounts for the effects of the lack of spontaneity.

**Keywords:** creativity, Moreno, spontaneity, theory of spontaneity–creativity

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MORENO'S THEORY OF SPONTANEITY–CREATIVITY (1953) is the cornerstone of his view of mental health and psychopathology. The theory extended beyond the traditional realm of psychiatry and became his view of what makes life productive, satisfying, and fulfilling. Moreno proposed “the idea that the spontaneous creative matrix can be made the central focus of man's world not only as the underlying source but on the very surface of his actual living” (1964, p. 109). Spontaneity and creativity, or, as Moreno referred to them, the *spontaneity state* and the *creative act*, are connected to other concepts that characterized his philosophy. Examples are the *Godhead*, *tele* (the basis of human interactions), the *moment*, the *encounter*, and *roles* (the basic matrix of the self).

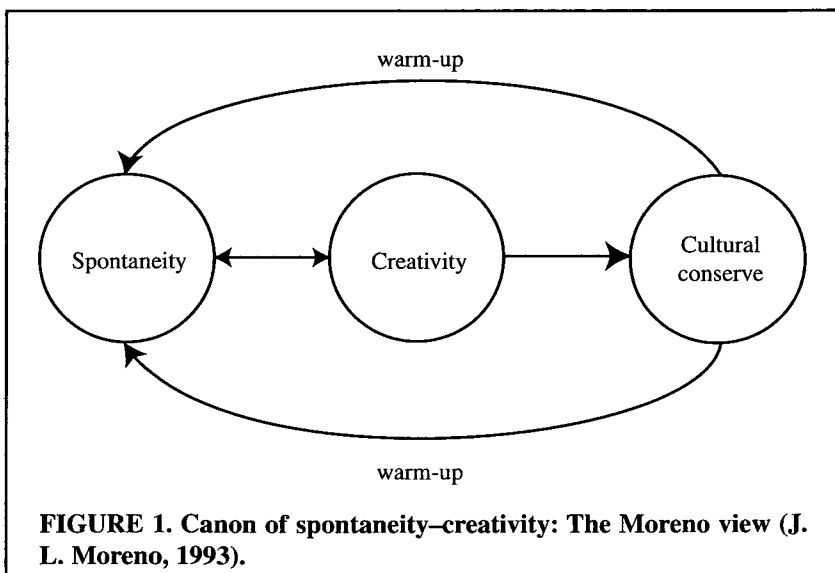
By his own admission, Moreno arrived at his spontaneity–creativity theory using two methods of inquiry. One was a dialectical analysis and the other



was his personal observation of the conduct of people on the psychodrama stage and in life. When he formulated his ideas during the 1930s and 1940s, these were popular methods of scientific inquiry. At that time, they were deemed appropriate to lend credence to theoretical postulations. Today, intellectual analysis and a single person's clinical observations are accepted ways of formulating hypotheses but are not considered an adequate proof of their veridicality. Nowadays, the most compelling affirmation of theoretical hypotheses is the support of empirical data discovered by means of scientific investigations. Therefore, the veridicality of the spontaneity–creativity theory still awaits empirical backing.

Until recently, the absence of a measure of assessing either the spontaneous state (spontaneity) or the creative act (creativity), or both states, made it virtually impossible to investigate the validity of the famous canon of spontaneity–creativity (Moreno, 1993, p. 18) shown in Figure 1. However, the design of the Spontaneity Assessment Inventory (Kipper & Christoforou, 2006) and the Spontaneity Deficit Inventory (Kipper & Jones, 2005) created new investigative opportunities.

Briefly, the process of creating the SAI and SDI was as follows: The authors contacted 20 senior psychodramatists from the United States and Europe. All had a minimum of 25 years of experience and were known for their professional expertise in psychodrama in their own countries and internationally. They wrote five adjectives (or two- or three-word characterizations) that describe “the feeling of being in a spontaneous state” and five



adjectives that describe “the feeling of being in a nonspontaneous state.” The authors incorporated their descriptions into one list that, after they deleted redundancies and long descriptions, contained 125 adjectives, or items. At that point, there were 79 items in the spontaneous category and 46 in the nonspontaneous category.

On the basis of those descriptions, the authors made two sets of identical forms of the inventory. Each included the question, “How strongly do you have these feelings or thoughts during a typical day?” One inventory contained the spontaneous items and one contained the nonspontaneous items. They arranged the responses to each of the two inventories on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 6 (*very strong*). The results of a series of item analyses left the SAI with 20 items and the SDI with 17 items.

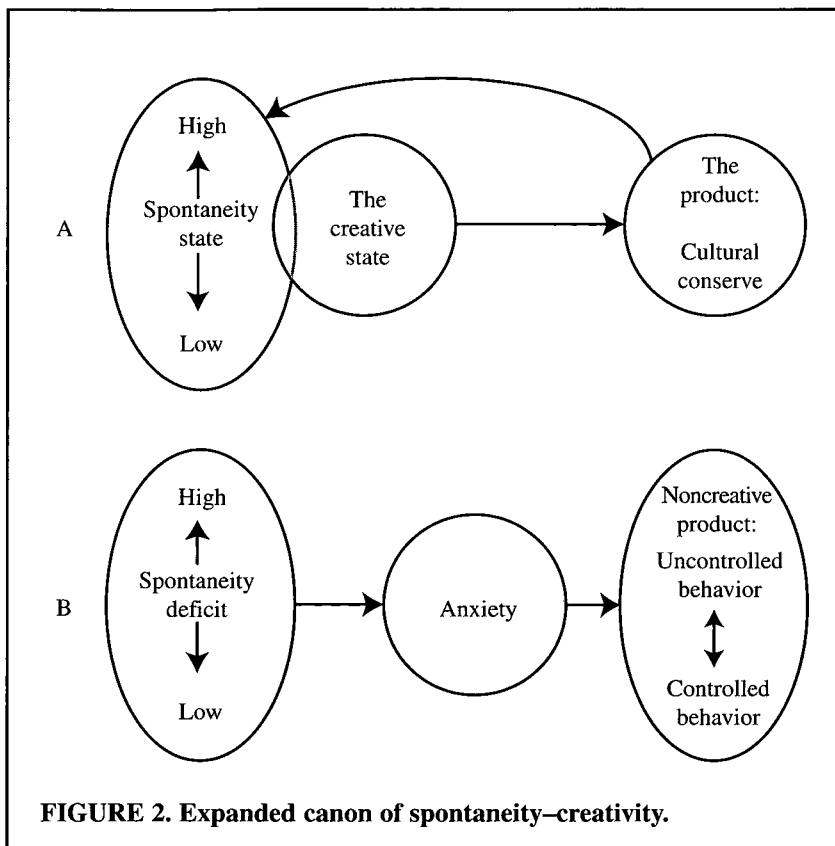
The results of the studies with the SAI and SDI confirmed some of Moreno’s propositions but also suggested the need for some changes to the hitherto untested postulates. In this article, I address Moreno’s classical canon of spontaneity–creativity and propose some modifications to make it congruent with empirical findings.

### **The Original Canon of Spontaneity–Creativity**

Before I discuss the suggested modifications of the canon of spontaneity–creativity, it is helpful to summarize the original version. Figure 1 shows the canon of spontaneity–creativity as conceived by Moreno in his seminal book, *Who Shall Survive?* (1953). It was later reprinted in the abridged student edition (1993). In the original canon, Moreno hypothesized that spontaneity leads to creativity, which, in turn, results in cultural conserves. Once created, cultural conserves encourage further spontaneity through the warm-up process, and the cycle repeats itself.

The four components of the original canon are as follows:

1. *Spontaneity*. *Spontaneity* has been defined in several ways. It was originally described as an energy that propels the person to an appropriate and novel response in the face of an unpredictable situation. For unknown reasons, the word *propels* was subsequently dropped from the definition in which spontaneity was mislabeled as a *response*, or an appropriate and novel response to a new situation. The later definition, however, is inconsistent with Moreno’s repeated reference to spontaneity as a state, not a response. Spontaneity is a state of mind, or a state of readiness to act creatively. It is a form of an intrinsic motivation (i.e., energy) that precedes the process of acting. In the original depiction of the theory, that part of the canon was labeled simply *spontaneity* (see Figure 1). However, to eliminate a misunderstanding, I labeled the modified version of the canon in that part of the theory as *spontaneity state* (see Figure 2).



2. *Creativity*. The middle circle in the canon is labeled *creativity*. Moreno differentiated between the process of the creative state and the outcome of the product of that process. He referred to process as the creative act, and he called the product the *cultural conserve*.

According to Moreno (1964), the creative act is a state of mind. He made this point clear in the following example from his imagined description of Beethoven's creative state of mind before he composed his Ninth Symphony:

As Beethoven was walking through his garden trying intensively to warm up to his musical ideas, his whole personality was in an uproar. He made use of every possible physical and mental starter he could muster in order to get going in the right direction. These visions, images, thoughts, and action-patterns—both musical and non-musical inspirations—were the indispensable background out of which the music of the Ninth Symphony grew. But all this background, which

cannot be truthfully divorced from the state in which Beethoven was when he was truly being the creator, is not to be found in the finished product. (p. 112)

Although, for the sake of consistency with Moreno's narrative, it could be argued that the term *creative act* should be retained, I decided to use the term *state of creativity* in the canon to be in line with the terminology used for spontaneity (see Figure 2).

3. *Cultural conserves.* *Cultural conserves* refer to encapsulated forms of the product that came out of the creative act. Classical examples of cultural conserves are books, paintings, CDs, DVDs, and musical scores. Any product, whether an inanimate object, behavior, or ideology, that can be used repeatedly is considered to be a cultural conserve. Cultural conserves serve two important psychological and societal functions. They help the individual cope in threatening situations, and they secure the continuity of a cultural heritage. In their pure, ideal form, cultural conserves need not be represented as a perfectly packaged product.
4. *Warm-up.* The *warm-up* is a process of arousal that stimulates the spontaneity state. It can be triggered by outside or internal stimulations.

### The Revised Canon of Spontaneity–Creativity

I suggest the proposed revised version of the canon of spontaneity–creativity in light of empirical results that emerged from studies in which researchers used the SAI and the SDI (Christoforou & Kipper, 2006; Kipper & Hundal, 2005; Kipper & Jones, 2005) and after a closer look at Moreno's own writing (1953, 1964). Figure 2 presents an illustration of the revised canon of spontaneity–creativity.

The first change concerns the overall depiction of Figure 2. I concluded that the canon needs to be divided into two parts, A and B. Part A depicts a healthy sequence of spontaneity–creativity and, with some changes, follows Moreno's classical canon. Part B is an additional element that was not proposed by Moreno. It represents the opposite side of part A, or the unhealthy (i.e., pathological) chain that characterizes a deficit in the spontaneity state or the maladaptive behavior sequence. Both sequences feature the theoretical processes of three essential components: motivation, process, and outcome. I represent the motivation aspect of the theory on the left side of Figure 2. I represent the process portion by the circles labeled *the creative state* and *anxiety*. The circles on the right side of Figure 2 represent the product aspect of the spontaneity–creativity sequence.

From the findings of Christoforou and Kipper (2006), Kipper and Hundal (2005), and Kipper and Jones (2005), I concluded that it is necessary to separate the healthy and unhealthy sequences. The studies revealed that the states

of spontaneity and spontaneity deficit are not two opposing ends of one continuum. Rather, they represent two separate continua. Spontaneity correlated positively with well-being, whereas spontaneity deficit correlated positively with measures of anxiety, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and one's orientation in the past. The results suggested that, whereas spontaneity and spontaneity deficit are mutually exclusive states of mind, it is impossible to predict one state from the other. Therefore, a full exposition of the spontaneity-creativity theory requires a description of both sequences.

The second change concerns the design of Figure 2 in which I highlight the fact that the spontaneity state may appear in different intensities, all of which are considered healthy motivations. Accordingly, the instrument that assesses spontaneity (i.e., SAI) has been designed as a scale that measures degrees of spontaneity. Figure 2 addresses that feature by depicting spontaneity as a state that expresses itself in various degrees of intensity.

The third change (see Figure 2) refers to the relationship between the spontaneity state and the creative state. In the classical Moreno canon, the two are portrayed as separate psychological states (see Figure 1). However, after an examination of psychodrama literature (Kipper & Hundal, 2005) and empirical outcomes, I believe that the two are not only closely related, but also have some common attributes. In describing the creative state (act), Moreno wrote, "The first character of the creative act is its spontaneity" (1964, p. 35). Spontaneity is evidently a feature shared by the spontaneity state and the creative state. In support of this view, a factor analysis of the SAI by Kipper and Jones (2005) revealed that creativity was one of the five factors that comprised the SAI, albeit the smallest one. It was responsible for 8.85% of the explained variance. Although the spontaneity state and the creative state are separate states of mind, they share some characteristics, a feature that is accounted for in Figure 2. Like the classical cannon, the modified version shows that the product of the creative state is the cultural conserve. It also retains the hypothesis that the warm-up process triggers spontaneity.

### **The New Part of the Canon of Spontaneity-Creativity**

The lower portion of Figure 2 shows the new part of the spontaneity-creativity theory, one that has not been featured in the classical canon of spontaneity: creativity. My reason for advancing this part of the canon grew from the fact that spontaneity and spontaneity deficit emerged as separate attributes and, to a large extent, were independent of each other. Furthermore, the cited empirical findings support the notion that every person can be defined in terms of both attributes (i.e., the extent of the spontaneity state and the extent of the spontaneity deficit). In a study of the experience of spontaneity and the lack of it among U.S. psychodramatists, participants reported that they feel

spontaneous during a small part of the day but that they are nonspontaneous during most of their waking hours (Kipper, 2000). It seems that the level of one's spontaneity state and the level of one's spontaneity deficit define one's creativity.

In part B of Figure 2, I also indicate that anxiety mediates the state of spontaneity deficit and its outcome behavior. The only empirical finding that supports this sequence is that spontaneity deficit was found to be strongly correlated with both measures of state and trait anxiety (Christoforou & Kipper, 2006). More data about the spontaneity deficit–anxiety connection is needed. In addition, the hypothesis depicted in part B of Figure 2 is that anxiety (other than performance anxiety) leads to a noncreative product that may express itself in various forms. The forms can range from delusions to uncontrolled emotional behavior to highly repetitive behavior. That part of Figure 2 is, at the moment, a speculation because there is no direct data to lend credence to it. Future researchers should study this speculation.

The term *warm-up* does not appear in part B of Figure 2. That is because, in theory, the warm-up always leads to a spontaneity state. Thus, it does not play a role in the spontaneity deficit sequence.

### Implications for Research and Theory Development

The revised canon of spontaneity–creativity concerns the classical theory underlying psychodrama; thus, its implications are primarily theoretical. However, one practical implication merits discussion. Part B of Figure 2 contains a three-component sequence of spontaneity—namely, spontaneous state, creative state, and cultural conserve—in which the first two components slightly overlap. Translated into operational terms, the three components are creating a readiness to act, helping the protagonist to generate ideas, and producing the final product (behavior) again, with the first two slightly overlapping. It appears that, when idea generation occurs (i.e., the creative state), the second component serves as an indispensable mediator between the part that evokes the readiness to act and the final completion of the act (behavior). This suggests that a greater emphasis ought to be given to the part that helps protagonists generate various options. It also suggests that a key component in training for spontaneity should be training clients to generate alternative ideas once they are sufficiently warmed up.

Turning to the research area, researchers have no justification, unlike in the past, for claiming that spontaneity cannot be measured and, therefore, that psychodrama theory need not be studied by means of the experimental or scientific method. The advent of two scales measuring spontaneity, the SAI (Kipper & Hundal, 2005) and the Personal Attitude Scale-II (Kellar, Treadwell, Kumar, & Leach, 2002), created new opportunities to test the veridicality of

various classical theoretical postulates. Therefore, I offer a few challenges for future research.

It is not clear whether the difference among people in their ability to display spontaneity is a matter of a general personality trait or whether the manifested frequency and intensity depends primarily on skill and practice. If the former is true, why are some people highly creative and, according to the canon, highly spontaneous, in one area of life—for example, great artists or scientists—but not in another area, such as their interpersonal skills? Does the difference in generating spontaneity in some areas of one's life but not in others stem from difficulty in one's spontaneity state or creativity state? If spontaneity is an innate trait with its fruition dependent on skill and practice, what does that practice look like? Is it more in the area of being open to new experiences (presumably part of the spontaneity state) or in learning to generate various ideas (part of the creativity state)?

In part B of Figure 2, the third component (the product) refers to two types of maladaptive behavior: controlled and uncontrolled. Both kinds of behavior are driven by anxiety (the middle component); thus, they are pathological. Being nonspontaneous is not necessary unhealthy. Rather, in many areas of life, one needs to be engaged in repetitive conduct to established stability and a healthy self-image. In part B of Figure 2, the difference between healthy repetitive (controlled) and unhealthy repetitive behavior is whether it is associated with anxiety. That hypothesis awaits empirical validation.

Last, with the advent of statistically reliable and valid measures of spontaneity, researchers have the opportunity to empirically investigate issues related to Moreno's theory. Researchers using that process can provide confirmation of theoretical ideas and suggest refinements or alterations of the old, hitherto unchallenged, positions.

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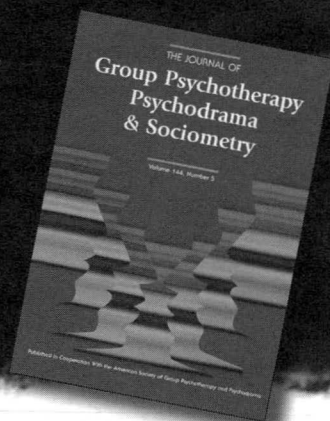
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# The Revised Spontaneity Assessment Inventory (SAI-R): Spontaneity, Well-Being, and Stress

DAVID A. KIPPER  
HAIM SHEMER

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**ABSTRACT.** The authors studied the construct validity and reliability of a revised version of the Spontaneity Assessment Inventory, the SAI-R. Compared with the original version of the inventory (D. A. Kipper & J. Hundal, 2005) the revised version is slightly shorter, containing only 18 items, and is arranged on a 5-point Likert scale rather than a 6-point scale as in the SAI. The authors administered the SAI-R, the Friedman Well Being Scale (FWBS; P. H. Friedman, 1994), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; S. Cohen, T. Kamarck, & R. Mermelstein, 1983) to 105 adults. The results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between the SAI-R and the FWBS. Also, the SAI-R correlated negative with the measure of stress (FSS) and, as expected, the FSS correlated negatively with the FWBS. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .79.

**Keywords:** spontaneity measure, stress, well-being

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THE IDEA OF MEASURING SPONTANEITY in the form of an action-based *spontaneity test* was introduced by Moreno (1944) more than 6 decades ago. The test consisted of a series of staged situations (scenes) that were not necessarily standardized, to which a single protagonist had to provide unrehearsed, impromptu responses. Observers watched and rated the responses for adequacy, novelty, and speed, and their evaluations formed what Moreno called a *spontaneity quotient*. Proposing such a test reflected awareness for the need to have a psychometrically valid measure of spontaneity. Albeit an inexact and impractical assessing procedure, it remained the only available measure of spontaneity for decades.

There are several reasons to construct a standardized measure of spontaneity. First, spontaneity is a fundamental concept in the theory of psychodrama. It serves as the rationale for several of its predictions. The theory predicts that spontaneity leads to, or is associated with, good mental health, and that *tele*, the force that attracts people to each other, requires relationships based on spontaneity (Moreno, 1964). The absence of an assessment procedure for spontaneity makes it impossible to empirically investigate the veridicality of these and other hypotheses. Second, spontaneity has served as a yardstick for measuring therapeutic progress. The absence of a means for demonstrating improvement in spontaneity (or the lack thereof) would render the concept inapplicable as a sound clinical tool. Third, spontaneity is characterized as energy that cannot be seen by the naked eye (Kipper, 1967, 1986; Moreno, 1964). Therefore, its existence must be inferred from a concrete carrier which, in the tradition of psychodrama, has been defined as the person's response(s) to a situation (Kipper, 1967). According to Moreno (1964), the determination of whether or not a given response conveyed spontaneity lies in its appropriateness and its novelty. However, there have been no suggestions as to how one can reliably assess these two facets of spontaneity. The criterion for measuring appropriateness may be an imprecise assessment, and determining the degree of the novelty of the response depends primarily on the client's subjective memory as to whether or not the response is new, rather than on the objective evaluation of an external assessor. In fact, it is surprising that the idea of measuring spontaneity remained unheeded for so long.

During the past 10 years, a new research effort appeared in the area of spontaneity assessment marked by the publication of three studies describing two standardized paper and pencil measures of spontaneity. The first measure was the Personal Attitude Scale (PAS; Collins, Kumar, Treadwell, & Leach 1997) a paper-and-pencil inventory that includes 58 items. The PAS has been revised and is now called the PAS-II (Kellar, Treadwell, Kumar, & Leach, 2002). The revised version contains 66 items and shows initial encouraging construct validity and good reliability. The items that comprise both the PAS and its revised version stem from the authors' survey of the spontaneity literature. Their effort revealed the following six characteristics of spontaneous behavior: "(a) it is novel and creative, (b) it is immediate, (c) it is adequate and appropriate, (d) it occurs easily and effortlessly, (e) the individual acts with total involvement, and (f) the individual is in control of his or her actions, which are not impulsive" (Kellar et al., p. 37).

Another measure of spontaneity is the Spontaneity Assessment Inventory (SAI) designed by Kipper and Hundal (2005). The SAI poses the question, "How strongly do you have these feelings and thoughts during a typical day?" The question is followed by 20 items that describe feelings and thoughts that characterize the state of being spontaneous (e.g., "energized," "uninhibited," "in control,"

“happy”). The items are arranged on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*none*) to 6 (*very strong*). The SAI correlates positively with measures of well-being (Friedman, 1994). It correlates negatively with state and trait anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushen, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), obsessive-compulsive behavior (Foa, et al., 2002), and past orientation as measured by the Temporal Orientation Scale (TOS; Jones, Banicky, Pomar, & Lasane, 2004). Christoforou and Kipper (2006) found that the SAI showed good split-half and test-retest reliability coefficients.

In the present study we introduce a slightly revised Spontaneity Assessment Inventory designated as the SAI-R. The revision includes (a) a reduction of the items from 20 to 18 and (b) a change in the range of possible responses from a 6-point to a 5-point Likert scale. We deleted two items because they were idioms that most likely could not be translated into other languages. Retaining these items in the inventory would have prevented it from being used in cross-cultural studies, an unnecessary handicap. We changed the range of the response scale from an even number (6-point scale) to an odd number (5-point scale) in response to a criticism that an even number of response options forces the respondents to choose between being spontaneous or being nonspontaneous. In contrast, an odd number of response options offers a middle-point option such as neither weak nor strong, for respondents who might have difficulty characterizing their feelings as spontaneous or not.

Perhaps the most important proposition in Moreno's approach to psychotherapy is the claim that spontaneity leads to psychological health (Moreno, 1923, 1953). The absence of empirical validation of this assertion casts a serious question about the theoretical foundation of classical psychodrama (Moreno, 1953, 1964). Other theoreticians also have noted the association between spontaneous behavior and mental health, though they may have not always used the term *spontaneity*. For example, Steitzel and Hughey (1994) regarded spontaneity to be a necessary state of mind responsible for experiencing joy and deep satisfaction. Maslow (1970) considered the ability to be spontaneous to be a necessary condition toward attaining self-actualization.

In view of the importance of the association between spontaneity and well-being, we plan to reaffirm the relation using the SAI-R. Kipper and Hundal (2005) reported that the original SAI was positively correlated with various dimensions of well-being, thus lending empirical credence to Moreno's basic proposition. The present study is designed to reexamine this relation using the SAI-R. We hypothesize that the SAI-R will also be positively correlated with dimensions of well-being.

In pursuit of further construct validity of the SAI-R, we also propose to investigate the relation between spontaneity and stress. Substantial evidence connects levels of stress to diminished physical and psychological well-being (e. g., Bengston, Reedy, & Gordon, 1985; Catz, Felton, & McClure, 2002; Daley, Hammen, Davila, & Burge, 1998; Davis, McKey, & Eshelman, 2000;

Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981; Post et al., 1996). Moreno (1964) regarded stress and anxiety as the opposite of spontaneity. Therefore, we predict that the SAI-R will correlate negatively with a measure of stress.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 105 adults (38 men, 67 women) from the San Diego, CA, area. They ranged in age from 18–69 years ( $M = 35.76$ ,  $SD = 9.43$ ). A detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the sample is presented in Table 1. We selected the participants through convenient sampling. The second author approached participants at their places of work and asked them to participate in the study. The workplaces included offices and schools that the second author was able to gain access to through personal connections. All participants volunteered to take part in the study and signed a consent form that explained they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants received no compensation, financial or otherwise, for their participation in the study.

### Measures

*The Revised Spontaneity Assessment Inventory.* The SAI-R is a self-report inventory designed to measure the intensity of the presence of spontaneity. Like the original SAI (Kipper & Hundal, 2005), it poses the question: "How strongly do you have these feelings and thoughts during a typical day?" The

**TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

| Variable                   | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Age (in years)             |          |          |           |
| Women                      | 67       | 36.10    | 9.98      |
| Men                        | 38       | 35.15    | 8.48      |
| Total sample               | 105      | 35.76    | 9.43      |
| Level of education (years) |          |          |           |
| Women                      |          | 16.18    | 2.51      |
| Men                        |          | 16.08    | 3.29      |
| Occupation                 |          |          |           |
| Graduate students          | 10       |          |           |
| Computer engineers         | 17       |          |           |
| School teachers            | 35       |          |           |
| Stay-at-home parents       | 43       |          |           |

question is followed by a list of 18 adjectives and phrases describing various feelings and thoughts such as “happy,” “alive,” “energized,” “uninhibited,” “Do whatever, within limits,” and “free to act, even outrageously.” The participants respond by rating each item on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*very weak*) to 5 (*very strong*).

As previously noted, the SAI-R is a slight modification of the original version of the SAI (Christoforou & Kipper, 2006; Kipper & Hundal, 2005). The original SAI contained 20 items with responses arranged on a 6-point Likert scale. The SAI correlates positively with a measure of well-being (Kipper & Hundal) and with present time orientation, and correlates negatively with state and trait anxiety and obsessive compulsive tendency (Christoforou & Kipper). The reported split-half reliability for the SAI is  $r = .88$  and the test-retest reliability with a 5-week interval yielded  $r = .75$ .

*The Friedman Well-Being Scale.* The Friedman Well-Being Scale (FWBS; Friedman, 1994) is a self-report scale designed to measure well-being. It consists of a series of 20 opposite adjectives (e.g., angry vs. calm), designed to measure adult well-being. Respondents rate themselves by indicating the extent that each of the adjectives applies to them using a 10-point semantic differential-type scale. The rating ranges from 1 (e.g., *very angry*) to 10 (e.g., *very calm*). The FWBS contains five subscales as follows: Emotional Stability (ES; 10 items); Self-Esteem/Self-Confidence (SE; 3 items); Joviality (JO; 3 items); Sociability (SO; 3 items); and Happiness (HA; 1 item). The scale provides both a total score reflecting the Friedman Well Being Composite (FWBC) and separate scores for each of its subscales. The reported internal consistency reliability estimates of the FWBC ranged from .92–.98. Split-half reliability with college students ranged from .69–.96. Test-retests of the FWBC scores ranged from .73 for students to .83 for patient samples. The FWBS manual reports more than 100 correlations with clinical indexes as well as with measures of personality and emotional stability.

*The Perceived Stress Scale.* The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al. 1983) is a 14-item self-report inventory designed to measure the perceived level of stress brought on by the respondent's life situations. Cohen et al. reported the PSS to be sensitive to a variety of stressful situations including chronic stress; reactions emanating from anticipated or impending future stressful events; and reactions to specific, present stressful events. The items are easy to understand and are general in nature (e.g., “In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?”). The responses to each item are arranged on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Half of the 14 items are phrased in reverse to prevent response-set reactions to the scale. The PSS addresses stress that occurred in the last month, thus focusing on events that are still affecting the respondent.

Cohen et al. (1983) reviewed three studies in which the PSS was administered to three large groups of students. They found statistically significant positive correlations between the PSS and levels of stress, depressive, and physical symptoms ( $rs = .52-.76$ ). The PSS correlated positively with social anxiety and perceived stress in two college student samples ( $r = .37$  and  $r = .48$ , respectively,  $ps < .01$ ,). It also correlated positively with a sample of cigarette smoking students in that the more they smoked, the higher their PSS scores were. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were .84, .85, and .86 for those three samples.

### *Procedure*

The participants were administered the three inventories individually. They took the three inventories home to complete and returned them to us the following day. The participants completed the inventories anonymously, disclosing only their gender, age, level of education, and career. The order of the three inventories in the package was altered for half of the participants.

### **Results**

The range of SAI-R scores obtained by the entire group was 18–90 ( $M = 66.41$ ,  $SD = 10.16$ ,  $Md = 67$ ). There were no statistically significant differences in the scores obtained by women ( $M = 65.80$ ,  $SD = 9.29$ ) and men ( $M = 67.50$ ,  $SD = 11.59$ ) on the SAI-R,  $t(103) = -.82$ ,  $p > .05$ . We also found that participants' scores on the SAI-R did not correlate significantly with either age ( $r = .01$ ) or level of education ( $r = .03$ ). The Cronbach's alpha for the SAI-R was .79.

We hypothesized that the SAI-R scores would correlate positively and significantly with the total scores of the FWBS and with each of its subscales, and this prediction was confirmed. Table 2 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the SAI-R and the FWBS. Table 2 shows that the SAI-R scores correlated positively with the total FWBS as well as each of its five subscales.

These results are very similar to those reported by Kipper and Hundal (2005) regarding the relation between the original SAI and the FWBS. In Kipper and Hundal's study, the correlation coefficient between the SAI and the total FWBS was positive and statistically significant,  $r = .36$ ,  $p < .01$ . In the present investigation there was a larger coefficient,  $r = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ . Also, the correlations between the original SAI and the five FWBS subscales ranged from  $r = .38$  to  $r = .60$ , almost identical to the range of correlations found in the present study with the SAI-R.

We also predicted that the SAI-R would correlate negatively with the PSS. Indeed, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between these

**TABLE 2. Pearson Product–Moment Correlations Among SAI-R, FWBS, and the PSS Inventories**

| Measure              | SAI-R | PSS  |
|----------------------|-------|------|
| FWBSC (total scores) | .58   | –.49 |
| Sociability          | .49   | –.35 |
| Self-esteem          | .38   | –.33 |
| Jovialty             | .56   | –.30 |
| Emotional stability  | .45   | –.44 |
| Happiness            | .52   | –.44 |
| PSS                  | –.45  |      |

*Note.*  $N = 105$ . SAI-R = Spontaneity Assessment Inventory–Revised. FWBS = Friedman Well Being Scale (Freedman, 1994). PSS = Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

$p < .001$  for all correlations.

two measures,  $r = -.45$ ,  $p < .001$ . The PSS was designed to measure stress; therefore, we expected it to correlate negatively not only with the SAI-R, but also with the FWBS. As predicted, the PSS did correlated negatively with each of the FWBS subscales and with the total FWBS (see Table 2).

### Discussion

The finding that spontaneity is positively related to well-being and negatively related to stress provides empirical support for Moreno's (1964) theoretical proposition regarding the relation between spontaneity and mental health. The results are congruent with the fundamental position of psychodrama that helping clients become more spontaneous is a desired goal of the psychotherapeutic endeavor. The finding that spontaneity is negatively correlated with stress is also congruent with an essential component of psychodrama theory and its hypothesis of inverse relations between spontaneity and anxiety or depression (Moreno, 1964). Altogether, we found a triangular set of relations that fits the theoretical expectations: Spontaneity was positively related to well-being and negatively related to stress, and stress was negatively related to well-being.

The absence of a spontaneity measure has hindered progress in studying the effects of a high level of spontaneity (Kipper, 2000). However, it did not impede empirical investigations of psychopathology—research in what psychodrama practitioners describe as a low level of spontaneity or *robopathy*, a robot-like behavior or repetitive conduct marked by fear of change and innovation (Yablonsky, 1976). The study of psychopathology, in general, does not stem from, and need not rely on, Moreno's theory (1953, 1964). Because of



this, we did not pursue further validations of the Spontaneity Deficit Inventory (SDI) described in earlier studies (Christoforou & Kipper, 2006; Kipper & Hundal, 2005). On the whole, Moreno's theory is less concerned with pathology and focuses more on well-being and mental health. In this respect, the availability of a reliable and valid spontaneity measure such as the SAI-R opens a hitherto closed avenue of research into the positive aspects of spontaneity-based clinical (psychodrama) interventions.

Regarding gender difference, Collins et al., (1997), Kellar et al., (2002), and Kipper and Hundal (2005) reported that men scored higher on spontaneity than did women, although in the study by Kellar et al. the difference accounted for such a small percentage of the variance that the authors deemed it irrelevant. In the present study, we found no significant difference between the SAI-R scores of men and women, a similar finding to that reported by Christoforou and Kipper (2006) on the SAI. We are not aware of any theoretical considerations that would suggest gender differences in spontaneity. Therefore, the present outcome is reasonable.

Our findings regarding the reliability of the SAI-R are acceptable for research purposes and within the range commonly found for self-report personality measurements. Certain research design characteristics may have contributed to our results. First, previous researchers studying spontaneity assessment have used university students as participants, which may not accurately reflect the general population. Using a convenient sampling procedure, we drew the vast majority of our participants from the general population. From a sampling and generalization perspective, this was an advantage. Second, our participants took the inventories home to fill out and returned them the next day, rather than completing them on the spot. We have no reason to assume that this procedure skewed the results. In fact, one may argue that in so doing our participants had more time and attention to devote to the inventories, rather than filling them in haste. Nonetheless, this procedure differed from the administration of the tests in previous studies.

The SAI-R is a new spontaneity measure that shows promise. It provides opportunities for empirically studying propositions related to psychodrama theory.

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## Book Reviews

*The Quintessential Zerka: Writings by Zerka Toeman Moreno on Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy*, edited by Toni Horvatin and Edward Schreiber. 2006. New York: Routledge. 328 pp. ISBN: 1583917284

This book contains samples of the writings of Zerka Toeman Moreno, from her first publication in 1944 to an unpublished paper about suicide prevention that she wrote in 2004. The purpose of the text was to compile the writings of Zerka Moreno, especially journal articles that have been difficult to access, and to provide, in one source, her significant contributions to the fields of psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy.

Anyone who has studied psychodrama and sociometry knows that J. L. Moreno, MD created them. He also made seminal contributions to naming and developing group psychotherapy. Zerka Moreno's role in clarifying and developing these inventions has been less obvious because she worked in the shadow of her husband, the creative genius J. L. Moreno, until his death in 1974. This text takes the reader back to Zerka Moreno's early contributions in the 1940s in which she described and clarified concepts that Moreno had presented in his earlier publications, which were translated from German and often difficult to understand.

*The Quintessential Zerka* includes the history of J. L. Moreno's and Zerka Moreno's contributions to the creation and development of psychodrama and sociometry, and, to a lesser extent, group psychotherapy. The historical account alone makes this text a valuable contribution to the theory and practice of psychiatry and applied psychology. Beyond the historical account, the most important contribution is the definition of the basic theoretical concepts of psychodrama and sociometry and specific examples of how these concepts are operationalized for a variety of populations, such as the military, well-baby clinic patients, premarital couples, parents, students, psychotic patients, and families. Because it provides the definition and application of concepts such as role-reversal, doubling, use of auxiliary egos, and mirroring, the book would be an excellent textbook for a course in psychodrama if it were supplemented with related readings

of action therapies. Article 14, "Psychodramatic Rules, Techniques, and Adjunctive Methods," and article 30, "Psychodrama, Role Theory, and the Concept of Social Atom," are particularly strong in historical development, theory, and application. Article 34, "In the Spirit of Two Thousand," explains Zerka Moreno's concept of future applications of psychodrama and the role of psychodramatists in society.

The text, as acknowledged by the editors, has built-in repetition because several of the articles as they were individually published provide a description of theory and techniques that are applied to a given population and are, of course, defined again in another article dealing with a different population. However, for the novice, some repetition can be helpful in learning concepts. One problem I noticed is that definitions of terms are not consistent, especially for the term *tele*. It is used so broadly it fails to define anything. For example, the same article (article 35) reads, "*to express the simplest unit of feeling transmitted from one individual towards another* we use the term *tele*, 'distant.'" "Tele is two-way empathy: like a telephone it has two ends" (p. 291); "If tele is the bond based on mutual recognition of the other, it follows that it is responsible for cohesion or lack of cohesion in a group" (p. 293); "Tele not only relates to mutuality of choice, it also points the way to reciprocity via the reasons for choice" (p. 293); and "We became acutely aware that tele involves two dynamic categories for being: namely time and space" (p. 294). My interpretation of tele is "liking, loving, and respecting in one" (p. 299). Even though tele seems loosely defined, the Morenos have used sociometric research to determine its level of existence in a group.

An observation I gleaned from reading about J. L. Moreno's theory development that I had not gained from earlier readings is that he was constantly researching his theory and application, even though his research designs were not very sophisticated in comparison with today's research design models. Unfortunately, current practitioners do not have the same zeal to research psychodrama.

Overall, I found this text to be a comprehensive presentation of the history, theory, and application of psychodrama with a lesser emphasis on the history and application of sociometry and group psychotherapy. This is to be expected because Zerka Moreno has probably made her greatest contributions to psychodrama. Without her major contributions to theory, application, and training and her work as the primary spokesperson for psychodrama, this potent psychotherapeutic intervention may have been lost.

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*The Quintessential Zerka: Writings by Zerka Toeman Moreno on Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy*, edited by Toni Horvatin and Edward Schreiber. 2006. New York: Routledge. 328 pp. ISBN: 1583917284

The editors have done a great service to the fields of psychodrama, sociometry, role theory, improvisational drama, sociatry, and other related endeavors that have emerged from the genius of J. L. Moreno, MD (1889–1974). For a number of years before Moreno's death, his third wife, Zerka, had become his most articulate spokesperson, the primary trainer at his institute and sanitarium at Beacon, New York, and the developer of continuing refinements and ideas of her own. Since his death, Zerka Toeman Moreno has continued to be the doyenne of psychodrama and continues to offer training workshops from her home in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 1989, Jonathan Fox edited and published a collection of Dr. Moreno's writings (which, though out of print for a few years, has now been republished). I remember thinking even then that a similar endeavor is indicated for Zerka Moreno's writings, which have, for me, always stood out as being significantly more clear and specific than her husband's. This book is even more relevant because those early and later articles have become increasingly hard to find in many libraries. Now students and trainers have ready access to these treasures.

Zerka Moreno edited much of J. L. Moreno's writing through the mid-1950s and co-edited and co-wrote the second and third volumes of the *Psychodrama* series (Moreno & Moreno, 1959, 1969) and she certainly helped with other publications as well. They were still major co-editors of this journal until Dr. Moreno's death. Aside from this, Zerka Moreno has been prolific in her writing of many of the more cogent articles in the professional literature.

The table of contents of *The Quintessential Zerka* is broken into five sections that are unfortunately called chapters, each with four to eight articles. Each section includes articles written during a different phase in Zerka Moreno's life. The first article was written in 1944. This section covers the period from 1941–48 when Zerka Moreno first met Moreno and became his secretary. The second chapter, or section, deals with her collaborations and activities from the time of her marriage until 1966, when she started taking on more training responsibilities as Moreno's involvement began to decline. The third section, "Transitions," reveals her increasing productivity and guidance. The fourth section, beginning with Moreno's death in 1974, is titled "On Her Own." Some of her articles presented here really capture the growing edge of the movement. The last section is titled "The New Millennium and Beyond" and includes three more recent articles that many people have not seen. In total, the book includes 36 articles (and these are not all of the articles Zerka Moreno wrote).

The editors added extra value to *The Quintessential Zerka* by asking Zerka Moreno for her comments on each article and how she currently views the significance of each article's contents. Thus, the chapters are each prefaced by between one and several paragraphs of Zerka Moreno's commentary. There are also selections from her poems, *Love Songs to Life* (Moreno, 1971/1993). These add a measure of personal emotion and wisdom to the mix.

A number of the articles included in these pages have certainly been important in my own development. When I first discovered psychodrama in the mid-1960s, in addition to the consulting and training I received from some experienced professionals, I tried to read more about the practice. I was surprised and dismayed to discover that there were no clear instructions in the most recognized sources (i.e., Moreno's three main *Psychodrama* volumes). However, I received some guidance from Zerka Moreno's articles on the double technique and psychodramatic rules, which are presented in chapters 5, 7, 13, and 14. These were particularly helpful when I was learning how to direct psychodramas.

Article 28 is a good summary chapter about psychodrama that Zerka Moreno composed for a major psychiatry textbook. (Alas, as psychiatry has turned more toward developing the biological basis of mental illness, the information explosion in recent years has pushed more interactive types of psychotherapy to the margins of major textbooks.)

The book begins with a foreword by Dale Richard Buchanan, who adds biographical information. These notes about Zerka Moreno's background are important because, other than sections in my *Foundations of Psychodrama* (Blatner, 2000, p. 26–27) and a monograph by Renee Ouidijk (2001), her biography has not been published.

The articles focus on a wide range of subjects, from child development to reflections on the history of psychodrama and its influences. The collection is over 300 pages long, with a thorough index and bibliography. It also includes a few of Zerka Moreno's unpublished papers. Many of these articles were hard to find, and the collection brings them together from a variety of sources and makes them available to psychodramatists. I agree with Zerka Moreno noting the seminal influence of J. L. Moreno's work, but I might temper the assessment of how much weight we should give to that influence in relation to the influence of others' contributions.

Moreno did not confine himself to psychodrama, at times suggesting that psychodrama was an action method for implementing the principles of sociometry. Yet, psychodrama has become the main approach associated with Moreno's work. *The Quintessential Zerka* may help to realign the field with a broader range of efforts and a higher-level vision. As a young man, Moreno was especially interested in ways to revitalize spirituality in light of contemporary circumstances. The immediacy and power of encounter and spontaneity

expressed not merely utilitarian human dynamics but, rather, his vision of the way Divine Creativity operated in the Cosmos (Blatner, 2000). His interest in drama as a vehicle for growth, healing, and community is alluded to in passing and a bit more cogently in a previously unpublished talk Zerka Moreno gave at the National Association for Drama Therapy conference held in New York in November, 1997. The bridges among drama therapy, psychodrama, and extensions of applied drama in other areas have continued to be developed, positively expressing Moreno's vision of *sociatry*.

In this collection, Moreno's interest in sociometry is repeatedly reaffirmed. In the economic and social fashion that made psychotherapy a major industry in the 1960s and 1970s, sociometry was perhaps insufficiently emphasized. The Board of Examiners has since made its study a core of preparation for certification. Yet, sociometry should be recognized as a young field in need of continual research and development. Zerka Moreno's articles relating to sociometry, particularly in chapters 8, 15, 16, and 35, will support this important frontier.

In regard to therapy, Zerka Moreno was more in touch with the development of new therapies or variations on the established approaches in the 1960s, but she was not unaware of the way that many had at least partial roots in Moreno's writings or the work of people influenced by the Morenos.

A 1971 article on the concept of catharsis, "Beyond Aristotle, Breuer and Freud: Moreno's Contribution to the Concept of Catharsis" (chapter 22) weaves together creative fantasy, scholarship, and historical perspective, noting the power of the mind-expanding and integrating catharsis by the actor. Alluding to some of the improvisational and new approaches to theater at the time, Zerka Moreno reaffirms the extra power of enacting one's own life situations. Since the 1990s, improvisational modes of drama have been used as tools to help people develop their capacity for spontaneity and mental flexibility, to enrich community-building, and to promote life enhancement. Many of these modes have either been directly influenced by J. L. Moreno's work or parallel his insights. This frontier of what he called *sociatry* is now called *applied theater*; an anthology of some of its various forms was published recently (Blatner, 2007).

I was intrigued with articles 25 and 27 in the middle of the book, which extend Zerka Moreno's earlier writings about doubling and child development (e.g., article 10) into a consideration of adult development. Although she wrote these articles around 1975, she intuitively noticed phenomena that have since been validated by neurophysiologists regarding the function of mirror neurons in social interactions (Hug, 2007). The power of helping the not-yet-ready-to-be-expressed ideas come forth was also addressed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky who called the edge of psychosocial skill development the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978). These articles also



complement J. L. Moreno's writings about the spontaneity theory of child development and add useful perspectives to the more well-known stages of psychosocial development described by Erik Erikson (1959).

In summary, *The Quintessential Zerka* is a major contribution to the field and a gathering of many classic articles. It should be included in the library of every trainer and serious psychodramatist.

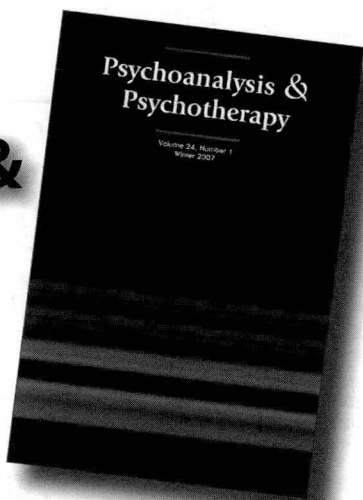
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